

**CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
POLITICAL STUDIES**

MASTER'S THESIS

**BALANCE OF POWER OR
HEGEMONY IN SOUTH
AMERICA?**

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Subject:	Geopolitical Studies (GPS)
Academic Year:	2015/2016
Supervisor:	RNDr. Jan Kofroň, Ph.D.
Date Submitted:	12st May 2016

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Title: Balance of power or hegemony in South America?

Introduction: theorizing balancing and hegemony

In *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Mearsheimer (2001) introduces and develops Offensive Realism. This is a form of structural realism, which means that the behavior of states are influenced mainly by the structure of the international system, which is ordered according to anarchic principle, and not by their internal characteristics. As a consequence of this anarchical structure, states are concerned mainly with their survival.

According to Offensive Realism, great powers seek to guarantee their survival by maximizing their share of world power and therefore by seeking hegemony, through diplomatic, economic and military means. However, there is a restriction: the stopping power of large bodies of waters constrain projection of land power, and as a consequence, great powers must satisfy with achieving regional and not global hegemony.

This is different from the proposition by Defensive Realism, another structural realist theory which claims that unlimited expansion is self-defeating because it triggers a balancing behavior by the other states in the system.

It is important to notice that balance of power can be defined as a behavior or as a final outcome, and the implications differ. For the purposes of this thesis, and taking into consideration that balance of power as a result necessitates logically a previous balancing process, balancing will be understood as a behavior.

The balancing process can take two forms: external, in the form of interstate alliance making or other substantive interstate cooperation that is aimed at preventing hegemony, by which balancing states must put aside secondary disputes among them; internal, meaning the enhancement of the power of the state in response to a potential hegemon, by means of emulation or innovation.

Offensive Realism acknowledges the possibility of balancing but deems it a rather complicated process, particularly in the external form.

Problem and research question: South America and the rise of Brazil as regional hegemon

Let South America be assumed now as a regional interstate system where Brazil is a potential hegemon. It is regional because it encompasses the whole South American continent and, all things being equal, there is no space for a new actor within the continent.

If the premises of Offensive Realism are true, then Brazil, due to its enormous size and its growing material capabilities –population, natural resources endowments, potential for military power and economic output- is the most suitable candidate for regional hegemon. In fact, South America has experienced a transition from balanced bipolarity, in which Brazil and Argentina were the two poles, to an unbalanced multi-polarity, where Brazil's military and latent power dwarfs the other states' capabilities. Argentina, due to the fact that is Brazil's neighbor and still second in size and capabilities, has an incentive to prevent the rise of Brazil as a regional hegemon.

The research question of this thesis is therefore: *from the point of view of Argentinean decision-makers, what are the options to prevent Brazilian regional hegemony?* This question can be at the same time subdivided in two questions: *Is external balancing a possibility in South America? What are the main challenges to be addressed by Argentinean decision makers in terms of internal balancing?*

The possible future scenarios corresponding to the variation in the response to these questions are: an unsuccessful checking or balancing process, and Brazilian hegemony as a result; or a successful balancing by which the regional distribution of power will present the form of balanced multi-polarity, or balanced bipolarity again.

Justification and relevance: implications for Argentinean foreign policy

The relevance of the thesis is given by its implications for Argentinean foreign policy. In terms of Van Evera, this is at the same time a theory-applying and a policy-prescriptive thesis (Van Evera, 1997). In the case that external balancing does not occur, then Argentina, which is only second to Brazil in size and material capabilities, and assuming she wants to prevent

being cast to a subordinated category, will have no choice but to engage in an internal balancing process.

Methodology and method

The research methodology for this thesis is deductive. Assuming that the premises of Offensive Realism are true, the following aspects need to be evaluated: first, what are the requirements that Brazil needs to accomplish in terms of distribution of power in the region and in what time period this will take place. Preliminary, the time period will most likely be around 2020-2030. Second, whether South American states, one by one, are more likely to have incentives to balance or to either bandwagon or buck-pass. Third, the possible role of the USA as an offshore balancer will be considered. Fourth, the prospects or challenges for internal balancing will be accounted for. For this I will draw on the models by Rose (1998) and Taliaferro (2006) that deal with domestic level intervening factors such as elite's perceptions and state capabilities to extract and mobilize resources.

The research method will be scenario analysis: with this method, I will deduce driving forces from Offensive Realism regarding external and internal balancing, identify highly probable contextual conditions for the future, identify critical uncertainties and generate a list of evidence and structure of evidence to gather in order to assess the degree to which the events in South American states system comports with the model (Junio & Mahnken, 2013).

Structure of the thesis

1. Introduction: Presentation of the research question and structure of the thesis.
2. Theoretical framework: Theoretical discussion regarding hegemonic transitions and balancing behavior in both external and internal form.
3. Method and methodology: Presentation of the scenario analysis method
4. Framing of the scenario: Discussion of the main assumptions regarding the potential of Brazil for becoming a regional hegemon, in terms of regional distribution of power, window of opportunity, and the time period of concern.

5. External and off-shore balancing: Assessment of prospects for external balancing in the region, and the role of USA as an extra-regional or off-shore balancer.
6. Internal balancing: Assessment of key challenges to be engaged by Argentinean decision makers in the domestic level in order to pursue internal balancing.
7. Conclusion: Answer to the research question and additional comments regarding implications for Argentinean foreign policy.

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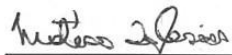
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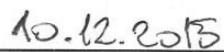
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Consent



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Date


RNDr. Jan Kofroň, Ph.D.



Date

DECLARATION:

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work, based on the sources and literature listed in the appended bibliography. The thesis as submitted is 210,259 keystrokes long (including spaces), i.e. 93 manuscript pages.

Matías Iglesias

9th May 2016

Your name

Your signature

Date

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Introduction

“Argentina is nowadays, in reality, a protectorate of Chile and Brazil,” claimed in 2013 Carlos Escudé, the most prominent IR scholar of Argentina, and added that the Argentinean Armed Forces are “mainly an organization devoted to meet salary obligations.”¹ This current state of affairs is the consequence of a long decay process initiated in the aftermath of Malvinas War in 1982: the elimination of compulsory military service, the dismantling of the arms industry, one of the lowest military expenditures in the Western hemisphere, and the volume of arms imports reduced almost to zero.²

Some civilian authors are of the view that Argentinean Armed Forces should be completely dismantled for good and the money saved for better purposes.³ At the same time, South American politicians claim that the present and future of the region is about peaceful integration and interstate conflicts are a thing of the past. The public discourse only has place for transnational threats such as drug trafficking, organized crime and terrorism, for which military role is minor (except in Colombia).⁴ Scholars who consider themselves specialists in defense have reacted accordingly and written about the absence of conflict hypothesis, as if Argentina had suddenly found itself in the best possible of worlds: total harmony, in spite of an ongoing dispute with United Kingdom about Malvinas and being surrounded by armed neighbors.⁵

The purpose of this thesis is to elaborate on the warning of Escudé about Argentina’s status as a tacit protectorate and to offer an argument against the currently prevailing idea that, in any case, Argentina does no longer need to worry about defense or military forces. The argument concerns the potential rise of Brazil as a South American regional hegemon.

¹ Carlos Escudé, “¿Somos un protectorado de Chile y Brasil?,” *La Nación* (Argentina) 24 Jan. 2013.

² Carlos Escudé, “Un experimento pacifista: las políticas exteriores y de seguridad de Argentina en el Siglo XXI,” *Serie Documentos De Trabajo, Universidad del CEMA*, 2010.

³ Martín Caparrós, “¿Necesitamos un ejército?,” *El País* (Spain) 9 Feb. 2012; Fernando Iglesias, *La Cuestión Malvinas: Crítica del Nacionalismo Argentino* (Buenos Aires: Aguilar, 2012).

⁴ Juan Battaleme, “América del Sur: Conflicto y cooperación en la dinámica regional,” *Ponencia presentada en el VII Congreso Nacional de Ciencia Política: Agendas Regionales en Escenarios de Conflicto, Universidad Católica de Córdoba*, 17 Nov. 2005.

⁵ Juan Battaleme, “¿Necesita Argentina una política de defensa?,” *CARI: Grupo de Trabajo sobre la Inserción de Argentina en el Mundo*, 16 Apr. 2014: 4, 6; Juan Battaleme, “La ausencia de hipótesis de conflicto y la trampa discursiva,” *Revista UCEMA*, Aug. 2010: 24-25.

The Federative Republic of Brazil is the world's fifth largest country and the largest in South America by geographical area and population. Moreover, the economy of Brazil is the world's ninth largest by nominal GDP.⁶ Brazil is a founding member of United Nations and member of the Group of 4 (G4) alongside Germany, India, and Japan, the advocates for a new permanent seat in the Security Council. The United Kingdom publicly supports new permanent seats but without veto rights. France supports the aspirations of G4, including veto rights.⁷

In *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Mearsheimer introduces and develops offensive realism. This is a form of structural realism, meaning that the behavior of states are influenced mainly by the structure of the international system and not by their internal characteristics. This structure is ordered according to an anarchic principle. As a consequence, states are concerned mainly with their survival. Great powers seek to guarantee their survival by maximizing their share of world power and therefore by seeking hegemony, through diplomatic, economic and military means. However, there is a restriction: the stopping power of large bodies of waters constrain projection of land power, and as a consequence, great powers must satisfy with achieving regional and not global hegemony. A regional hegemon is a state that is so powerful that it dominates all the other states in the region. No other state has the military wherewithal to put up a serious fight against it.⁸

Hegemony does not need to be manifested in a thrust towards expansion and military conquest, although that is always a possibility. It means that the hegemon is in a position to dictate rules of behavior to its neighbors.⁹

If the premises of offensive realism are true, then Brazil, due to its enormous size and its growing material capabilities –population, natural resources endowments, potential for military power and economic output- is the most suitable candidate for making an attempt at regional hegemony in South America.

⁶ The World Bank, "World Development Indicators," 20 Dec. 2015, <<http://wdi.worldbank.org/table/1.1>>.

⁷ Lydia Swart, "Timeline of UN Security Reform," *Center for UN Reform*, 12 Nov. 2015, 20 Dec. 2015, <http://www.centerforunreform.org/?q=node/681>.

⁸ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001).

⁹ John J. Mearsheimer, "The Gathering Storm: China's Challenge to US Power in Asia," *The Chinese Journal of International Relations* 3, 2010: 381-396.

At the moment, the United States is the only regional hegemon in the world. Offensive realism certainly expects the United States to be concerned about a challenge to its rule in the southern region of the Americas, as it was concerned with checking rising regional hegemons in the past (Imperial Germany, Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan and the Soviet Union), and as it is concerned nowadays with the rise of China in East Asia.

However, I will argue that South American states should not rely blindly on the hope that the United States will eventually come to their aid. They would be wiser to consider the possibility of being on their own. This is particularly true for Argentina, second only to Brazil in terms of size and capabilities, and historically antagonist of the possibility of Brazilian regional hegemony.

Research questions

The research question of this thesis is: *From the point of view of Argentinean decision-makers, what are the options in order to check an eventual Brazilian attempt at regional hegemony?*

This question can be subdivided in the following questions: Firstly, *should Argentina rely on extra regional balancing conducted by the United States?* If the answer is in the negative, *what are the chances of external balancing in South America, i.e. a coalition of South American states?* Finally, if both extra regional and external balancing fail, Argentina will have to recur to internal balancing. In that case, the question is: *What will be the challenges and choices of Argentinean decision makers in terms of internal balancing?*

Justification and relevance

The relevance of the thesis is given by its implications for Argentinean defense policy. In terms of Stephen Van Evera, this is a policy-evaluative or policy-prescriptive thesis, for it evaluates current or future public policies, and tries to discern the effects of these policies by means of forecasts. These forecasts rest in turn on implicit or explicit theoretical assumptions.¹⁰

¹⁰ Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997).

In this case, offensive realism might provide a possible future scenario in which Argentina will have no choice but to rely on its own resources, i.e. internal balancing, in order not to be at the mercy of the implications of Brazilian hegemony. As a consequence, Argentina should reevaluate its current policy of keeping the military forces in a condition such that they are no longer credible deterrents, leaving thus the country practically defenseless in the event of an armed conflict.

Methodology and method

The research methodology for this thesis will be scenario analysis. Scenarios can be understood as counterfactuals about the future. Political scientists almost exclusively focus on historical counterfactuals. However, future counterfactuals exist, and they are an effective way for students to apply theory to policy. In order to do this, the researcher with a theory in mind will deduce from it the logical future in a narrative that connects theoretical expectations with observed signals.¹¹

I will deduce from offensive realism driving forces in regard to the international level environment (i.e. the distribution of power and relative material capabilities) and their most likely evolution in the coming years; next, I will identify highly probable contextual conditions and critical uncertainties. This will allow me to write the scenario.

The research method is thus deductive and combines qualitative and quantitative elements. The key assumption is that the premises of offensive realism constitute an appropriate theoretical framework to analyze the international environment and extract implications. If offensive realism would prove a fundamentally misguided theory, all that follows would be superfluous too. But for the purposes of this thesis, which is an exercise in application of a theory to policy, I will assume that offensive realism is essentially “correct.”

¹¹ Timothy J. Junio and Thomas G. Mahnken, “Conceiving of Future War: The Promise of Scenario Analysis for International Relations,” *International Studies Review*, no. 15, 2013: 374-395; see also Dong-Ho Han, “Scenario Constructions and Its Implications for International Relations Research,” *The Korean Journal of International Studies* 9 no. 1, 2011: 39-65; Michael F. Oppenheimer, “From Prediction to Recognition: Using Alternate Scenarios to Improve Foreign Policy Decisions,” *SAIS Review* 32, no. 1, winter-spring 2012: 19-31.

I will basically evaluate with the premises of offensive realism: 1) what requirements Brazil is accomplishing in terms of distribution of power and material capabilities in the region; 2) the role of the United States as an offshore balancer; 3) whether South American states are more likely to have incentives to join together and balance, or to either bandwagon or buck-pass.

However, even if offensive realism provides a good guidance for aggregate patterns of state behavior in a regional system, it is not so accurate when it comes to the specific daily behavior of a particular state. For this reason, when it comes to the challenges and choices of Argentina in terms of internal balancing, I will recur also to neoclassical realism.

Theoretical framework

As it follows from the previous sections, Mearsheimer's offensive realism is the theory upon which the scenario will be based. The idea that great powers seek to maximize their share of world power and therefore aim at regional hegemony is the key assumption underlying the future scenario for South America. Offensive realism will also have a lot to say about the role of the United States and the prospects of a South American inter-state coalition to check Brazilian rise.

Geopolitical thought, i.e. the study of the interrelations between geography and politics, will also play a significant role. Offensive realism has a place for geopolitics when it comes to the importance of relative distance or position, and buffer zones. In the case of South America, there are two elements to be taken into consideration: 1) the relative position or distance of South American states with respect to the potential hegemon, 2) the significance of the Amazonia as buffer zone in terms for incentives for balancing.

Finally, when it comes to the question of internal balancing, offensive realism falls short of a meaningful contribution. Neoclassical realism, in particular the works of Randall Schweller and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro,¹² will offer a model for intervening state level variables. These will help to address the challenges and choices of Argentina.

¹² Randall Schweller, "Unanswered Threats: A Neoclassical Realist Theory of Underbalancing," *International Security* 29, no. 2, 2004: 159-201; Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, "State Building for Future Wars: Neoclassical Realism and the Resource-Extractive State," *Security Studies* 15, no. 3, 2006: 464-495. See also Steven E. Lobell, et al., eds., *Neoclassical realism, the state and foreign policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2009); Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics* 51, no. 1, 1998: 144-172.

Structure of the thesis

Chapter 1, “Offensive realism for South America,” proceeds in three steps. I introduce first the original Waltzian defensive realism, and then Mearsheimer’s offensive realism. The idea is to highlight the differences between the two in terms of expectations and policy prescriptions. I will mention important concepts in offensive realism such as the difference between military and latent power, and how to measure it. Finally, I argue why offensive realism is suitable for South America.

Chapter 2, “Methodology and method,” defines the scenario methodology as a future counterfactual narrative relying on the premises of offensive realism, and introduces the guidelines I will use for plotting the scenario of this thesis, with concepts such as driving forces, contextual conditions and critical uncertainties. I also provide examples of previous scenarios in International Relations and geopolitics. I present then the possible scenarios that I consider for South America.

Chapter 3, “South America and the rise of Brazil,” is very extensive. I explain first why I refer to a South American regional system, and not to Latin America, and I define its limits. I analyze relative material capabilities and distribution of power, to understand next why Brazil is a potential candidate for regional hegemony, and what the meaning of hegemony is in this context. Finally, I comment on some limitations to this scenario approach based on offensive realism.

Chapter 4, “The United States as an offshore balancer,” addresses one critical uncertainty of my scenario analysis. The chapter first introduces the theory of offshore balancing, which predicts that the United States will want to check any challenge to its rule over the southern part of the Americas. The very counterfactual nature of scenario comes to the front here, because the question is “What if?” What if the United States finds itself in a situation in which it cannot react properly? The second section is then about windows of opportunity for Brazil. The third section is about implications of offshore balancing for third states involved, something which offensive realism overlooks, because it is mostly concerned about great powers.

Chapter 5, “Geopolitics of South America and external balancing,” begins by explaining the contribution of geopolitical variables to the analysis of international politics. Offensive realism, in particular, makes use of relative position or distance, and the meaning of buffer zones in the form of large bodies of water, the territory of other states, mountain ranges, etc. There is a

description of South American regional system, from the point of view of physical and human geography, and the implications regarding patterns of conflict and cooperation, meant as an example of applied geopolitical thought. Lastly, with a combination of the two geographical variables aforementioned plus a third variable from structural realism (relative power), I evaluate the incentives of South American states to present a balancing coalition against a rising Brazil.

Chapter 6, “Neoclassical realism and Argentinean internal balancing,” elaborates first on the idea that neorealism and neoclassical realism are not competitors but complementary approaches that seek to explain different phenomena. Then, I proceed to define the state as the national security executive, and to identify what other domestic actors need to be considered. I present Schweller’s theory of “under-balancing” and Taliaferro’s theory of state power and how it relates to choices of strategy for internal balancing.

Chapter 7, “Wild card: nuclear weapons,” is very brief and discusses the possibility that the region ceases to be a nuclear weapon free zone; this implies the abandonment of the Treaty of Non-Proliferation and the Treaty of Tlatelolco by either Brazil or Argentina, and what would be the implications for an offensive realist scenario.

Finally, the concluding chapter provides an answer to the research questions, elaborates on the possible future scenarios for South America and the implications for Argentinean security policy.

1. Offensive realism for South America

The theoretical framework of this thesis is based on two bodies of international relations theory within the realist school of thought. The first one is offensive realism. Offensive realism is a theory proposed fundamentally by Mearsheimer in *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. Offensive realism distinguishes itself from a first formulation of so-called neorealism (or structural realism)¹³ by Kenneth Waltz in *Theory of International Politics*,¹⁴ which is labelled defensive realism. The second one is neoclassical realism, and I will discuss it in chapter 6.

The divide within neorealism between offensive realism and defensive realism represents a theoretical competition because they fundamentally diverge on the implications of anarchy: whereas defensive realism holds that anarchy provides strong incentives for restraint, offensive realism holds the opposite. The two theories generate thus different predictions and policy prescriptions.¹⁵

This chapter proceeds as follows: the first section introduces the most important aspects of Waltz's formulation of defensive realism. Next, Mearsheimer's offensive realism is explained, compared and contrasted with defensive realism. At the end of the chapter, I make the case for the suitability of offensive realism for South American states system.

1.1 Defensive realism

Before the emergence of neorealism, classical realism had argued that states are led by human beings who have a will to power. This inherent will to power is the principal driving force pushing each state to strive for supremacy. International anarchy is a second-order cause of state behavior. Contrarily, neorealism does not assume that states are inherently aggressive because they are infused with a will to power. It is the structure of the international system that forces great powers to pay careful attention to the balance of power.¹⁶

¹³ Neorealism and structural realism are used as synonyms.

¹⁴ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1979).

¹⁵ Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, "Security Seeking under Anarchy: Defensive Realism Revisited," *International Security* 25, no. 3, 2000-2001: 134.

¹⁶ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 19.

According to Waltz, the international system is thus composed of a structure and of interacting units.¹⁷ Structures are defined or arranged according to three elements: 1) the principle by which a system is ordered, 2) the specification of functions of formally differentiated units and 3) the distribution of capabilities across those units.¹⁸

For example, domestic systems are centralized and hierarchic where the units are differentiated by the function they perform and stand in relations of super- and subordination. The international system instead is ordered according to the principle of anarchy and it is composed of like units in relation of coordination, where each one is the equal of all the others, none is entitled to command, and none is required to obey.¹⁹

The units are not differentiated by their function but by their capabilities. In fact, although states are like units functionally, they differ vastly in their capabilities. The distribution of capabilities is not an attribute of the units but of the system. Hence, the structure of an international system changes with changes in the distribution of capabilities.²⁰

An anarchic international system is a self-help environment. Those units that fail to help themselves, or do so less effectively than others, will fail to prosper.²¹ Scholars that advocate a structural view of international politics would more or less agree with Waltz up to this point. The disagreement begins when Waltz develops further implications of international anarchy.

According to Waltz, the goal that the anarchic international system encourages states to seek is security. Whereas in classical realism power was the goal, power is here a means to an end. Increased power may or may not help reach security. States can seldom afford to make maximizing power their goal. Moreover, maximizing power can prove a self-defeating strategy. The system induces the recurrence of balance of power. The first concern of states is not to maximize power but to maintain their positions in the system.²²

In this way, Waltz and the defensive realists like him argue that states may limit their pursuit of power to maximize their security. Sustained hegemonies rarely if ever rise in multistate

¹⁷ Waltz, *Theory*, 79.

¹⁸ Waltz, *Theory*, 82, 88, 100-101.

¹⁹ Waltz, *Theory*, 88, 93, 97.

²⁰ Waltz, *Theory*, 97, 105.

²¹ Waltz, *Theory*, 105-106, 118.

²² Waltz, *Theory*, 119, 125-127.

systems, because a balancing coalition will form against any state that threatens to gain a position of hegemony.²³

In defensive realism, balance checkmates offenses and great powers must be careful not to acquire too much power, because excessive strength may trigger a coalition against them.²⁴ Defensive realism suggests that states ought to generally pursue moderate strategies as the best route to security. Only under certain circumstances defensive realism expects states to pursue expansionist strategies as a means to achieve security.²⁵

Notwithstanding the aforementioned, critics of defensive realism (such as Fareed Zakaria and Randall Schweller) charge that defensive realism cannot explain state expansion because there are never international incentives for such behavior.²⁶ Moreover, according to Mearsheimer, Waltz has no place in his theory for profound or deep causes of war. Waltz does not seem to conceive any important benefits to be gained from war. In fact, wars are largely the result of uncertainty and miscalculations.²⁷

1.2 Offensive realism

Offensive realism is not only a descriptive theory that explains how great powers have behaved in the past and how they are likely to behave in the future. It is at the same time a prescriptive theory. States should behave according to the dictates of offensive realism.²⁸

As a strand of neorealism, offensive realism also assumes that the international system strongly shapes the behavior of states, which are the principal actors in world politics. Like its defensive counterpart, it pays little attention to individuals or domestic political considerations such as ideology, and it tends to treat states like black boxes or billiard balls. The behavior of states is influenced mainly by their external environment, not by their internal characteristics. Also like defensive realism, it assumes that anarchy is the ordering principle of international system, i.e. the

²³ Jack S. Levy, "What Do Great Powers Balance Against and When?" *Balance of Power. Theory and Practice in the 21st Century*, ed. T.V Paul, James Wirtz and Michel Fortmann (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004) 32, 35.

²⁴ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 20.

²⁵ Taliaferro, "Security Seeking under Anarchy," 129, 152.

²⁶ Taliaferro, "Security Seeking under Anarchy," 129-130.

²⁷ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 20.

²⁸ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 11-12.

system comprises independent states that have no central authority above them. Therefore, survival is the primary goal of great powers.²⁹

However, offensive realism has three other assumptions about the international system: 1) states inherently possess some offensive military capability, which gives them the wherewithal to hurt and possibly destroy each other; 2) states can never be certain about other states' intentions, and 3) great powers are rational actors, aware of their external environment, who think strategically about how to survive in it.³⁰

The absence of a central authority that can protect states from each other, combined with the fact that states always have some offensive military capability, and the uncertainty about other states' intentions, results in three general patterns of behavior: fear, out of suspicion and anticipation of danger; self-help, out of a sense of vulnerability and loneliness, and power maximization. Self-help does not preclude states from forming alliances, but these are only temporary marriages of convenience. States always operate according to their own self-interest. In other words, the assumptions about the international system create powerful incentives for great powers to think and act offensively with regard to each other.³¹

In defensive realism, states often show restraint in their quest for power in order not to provoke a coalition against them that would ultimately defeat them and leave them worse than before. Offensive realism makes the opposite conclusion.

States employ a variety of means –economic, diplomatic, and military- to shift the balance of power in their favor, even if doing so makes other states suspicious or even hostile. States pay close attention to how power is distributed among them, and they make a special effort to maximize their share of world power, which is their overriding goal. Moreover, their ultimate aim is to be the hegemon: a state that is so powerful that it dominates all the other states in the system. The pursuit of power stops only when hegemony is achieved. Only a misguided state would pass up an opportunity to be the hegemon in the system because it thought it already had sufficient power to survive. As a consequence, there are no status quo powers in the international system. Great powers

²⁹ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 10-11, 17, 30.

³⁰ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 30-31.

³¹ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 32-33.

almost always have revisionist intentions, and they will use force to alter the balance of power if they think it can be done at a reasonable price.³²

“At a reasonable price” means that states are not mindless aggressors that engage in losing wars or pursue Pyrrhic victories. On the contrary, before great powers take offensive actions, they think carefully about the balance of power and about how other states will react to their moves. Nevertheless, great powers miscalculate from time to time because they make decisions based on imperfect information.³³ Moreover, great powers cannot always act on their offensive intentions, because behavior is influenced not only by what states want, but also by their capacity to realize these desires. Great powers facing powerful opponents will be less inclined to consider offensive action.³⁴

However, the biggest limitation that makes it virtually impossible for any state to achieve global hegemony is the stopping power of water. The difficulty of projecting power across the world’s oceans onto the territory of a rival great power is the principal impediment to world domination. Water is not a serious obstacle for a navy that is transporting ground forces across an ocean and landing them into a friendly state, but when a navy attempts to deliver an army onto territory controlled and well-defended by a rival great power, water is a forbidding barrier. Navies are therefore at a significant disadvantage when attempting amphibious operations against powerful land-based forces. Armies that have to traverse a large body of water to attack a well-armed opponent invariably have little offensive capability, also because there are significant limits on the number of troops and the amount of firepower that a navy can bring.³⁵

The United States, for example, is the most powerful state on the planet today, but it does not dominate Europe and Northeast Asia, and it has no intention of trying to conquer and control those distant regions, mainly because of the stopping power of water. Historically, the stopping power of water explains in good part why the United Kingdom and the United States (since becoming a great power in 1898) have never been invaded by another great power, or why the United Kingdom has not tried to conquer territory in the European continent.³⁶

³² Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 2, 29, 34.

³³ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 37-38, 40.

³⁴ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 37.

³⁵ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 41, 114.

³⁶ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 41, 44.

In sum, there has never been a global hegemon, and there is not likely to be one anytime soon. In this context, the best outcome a great power can hope for is to be a *regional hegemon*³⁷ and possibly control another region that is nearby and accessible over land. The presence of oceans on much of the earth's surface makes it impossible for any state to achieve global hegemony. It is however possible to apply the concept of hegemony, as domination of a system, to a system that is not the entire world but a particular region. Thus, one can distinguish between global hegemons, which dominate the world, but which have never existed, and regional hegemons, which dominate distinct geographical areas. According to Mearsheimer, the United States has been a regional hegemon in the Western Hemisphere for at least the past one hundred years.³⁸

So great powers strive for hegemony in their region of the world. The best way to ensure their survival is to be the most powerful state in their region. The stronger a state is relative to its potential rivals, the less likely it is that any of those rivals will attack it and threaten its survival.³⁹ Now, a very important consideration is that the level of fear between states varies not with assessments about each other's intentions, but with changes in the distribution of power. Intentions are ultimately unknowable, so states worried about their survival must make worst-case assumptions about their rivals' intentions. Great powers balance against material capabilities, not intentions.⁴⁰ Material capabilities are the basis of power.

States have two kinds of power: military power and latent power. Military power is based largely on the size and strength of a state's army and its supporting air and naval forces. Even with nuclear weapons, armies are the core ingredient of military power. Independent naval forces and strategic air forces are not suited for conquering territory. Mearsheimer provides then a model for measuring military power. 1) Relative size and quality of army: number of soldiers, quality of soldiers, number of weapons, quality of weaponry, and how those soldiers and weapons are organized for war; 2) Supporting (not independent) air forces: inventory of aircraft, available numbers and quality, pilot efficiency, ground-based air defense systems, reconnaissance

³⁷ Cursives are mine.

³⁸ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 40, 44, 83-84.

³⁹ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 33.

⁴⁰ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 45.

capabilities and battle-management systems; 3) power-projection capabilities: whether large bodies of water limit an army's offensive capability.⁴¹

Latent power refers to the socio-economic ingredients that go into building military power; it is largely based on a state's overall size of its population and its wealth. Population size matters a lot because great powers require big armies and these can be raised only in countries with large populations. For Mearsheimer, states with small populations cannot be great powers. Wealth is important because money, technology and personnel is needed to build military forces and to fight wars. A state cannot build a powerful military if it does not have the money and technology to equip, train, and continually modernize its fighting forces. It is also important to have industries producing the newest and most sophisticated technologies oriented to the most advanced weaponry.⁴²

The next step is to define a good indicator of mobilizable wealth, i.e. the resources a state has at its disposal to build military forces. In order to economize words, wealth here includes also the size of population. Mearsheimer starts with gross national product (GNP) as the most commonly used indicator of a state's wealth. GNP is not always a good indicator of latent power. It does not always capture mobilizable wealth and technological sophistication of different states. It is possible for two states to have similar GNPs but substantially different population sizes and markedly different levels of industrialization. GNP, he concludes, does a reasonably good job but sometimes is not a sound measure of latent power. Consequently, one can either find an alternative indicator that does a better job, or use GNP but add the appropriate qualifiers.⁴³

In this thesis I will take the second approach. To GNP I will add some indicators of National Material Capabilities as defined by the Correlates of War Project: total population, iron and steel production, energy consumption, military personnel and military expenditure; I will also consider percentage of population below poverty line.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 56, 134.

⁴² Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 55, 60-61.

⁴³ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 62-65.

⁴⁴ J. David Singer, Stuart Bremer and John Stuckey, "Capability Distribution, Uncertainty, and Major Power War, 1820-1965," *Peace, War, and Numbers*, ed. Bruce Russett (v. 4.0) (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1972) 19-48, 10 Feb. 2016 <<http://www.correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/national-material-capabilities>>.

To sum up, states are power maximizers. They care about relative power, not absolute power. States that maximize relative power are concerned primarily with the distribution of material capabilities and they try to gain as large a power advantage as possible over potential rivals, because power is the best means to survival in a dangerous world.

They do this by four mechanisms: firstly, they try to dominate the balance of land power, because that is the best way to maximize their share of military might. Military power is based largely on the size and strength of a state's army and its supporting air and naval forces, but in any case, wars are won mainly on the ground. Secondly, states care greatly about latent power, because abundant wealth and a large population are prerequisites for building military forces. Therefore, states aim to maximize the amount of the world's wealth that they control. States care about relative wealth, because economic might is the foundation of military might. Thirdly, they aim at nuclear superiority over their rivals, although this is a very difficult objective. Lastly, they aim at regional hegemony. The key moment for that comes when there is a critical power gap between the potential hegemon and the second most powerful state in the system. To qualify as a potential hegemon, a state must have –by some reasonably large margin- the most formidable army as well as the most latent power among all the states located in its region.⁴⁵

1.3 Why offensive realism

In this section I justify my choice of offensive realism for this thesis.

The first element to be considered is the following: the core notion of defensive realism is that a balance of power, defined as a multipolar or bipolar distribution of capabilities, is the normal, ubiquitous state of all international systems. Unipolar or hegemonic systems do not form in multistate systems because perceived threats of hegemony over the system generate balancing behavior by other leading states in the system. Even if they do form, they will be inherently unstable, as balancing processes push the system back to bi-or multipolarity.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 34, 45, 56, 140-147. Mearsheimer presents these mechanisms or objectives in a different order, with regional hegemony first.

⁴⁶ William C. Wohlforth, Stuart J. Kaufman and Richard Little, "Introduction: Balance and Hierarchy in International Systems," *The Balance of Power in World History*, ed. Stuart J. Kaufman, Richard Little and William C. Wohlforth (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007) 3, 18.

If such is the logic of the international system, then states would have little incentive to pursue expansionist policies. However, Wohlforth, Kaufman and Little find that the defensive realist assertion about the universality of balance throughout different eras and regions has no support. Balanced and unbalanced distributions of power seem roughly equally common. Balances frequently form, but they always break down, sometimes into fragmented or nonpolar systems, but more often into unipolar or hegemonic systems, the longevity of which is widely variable.⁴⁷

This first consideration notwithstanding, it is worthwhile to analyze the specific predictions each approach proposes when it comes to external balancing. When a single state or coalition of states gains preponderance and weaker states feel they could lose their security or even cease to exist, they can flock together to form balancing coalitions. This is called external balancing. Threatened states could also adopt an internal balancing strategy (which will be considered later). The point to be made now is that even theorists that emphasize balance-of-power outcomes acknowledge that not every state can afford external balancing at any time. Sometimes they have incentives to buck-pass or bandwagon. Buck-pass is to let someone else do the balancing. Bandwagon means alignment with the source of danger.

My reasoning is that when one considers the specific arguments for balance, buck-pass or bandwagon, the distinction between offensive and defensive realism is not so meaningful, and rather irrelevant when it comes to the analysis of South American states system. This is because at the moment of analyzing a particular region, geopolitical elements necessarily come to the fore. Geopolitics in this context refers in broad terms to the effects of geography on international politics. Specifically, one could ask for the effects, if any, of relative positions of the states involved, the presence of buffer zones, and relative power.

The first element, then, has to do with relative position or relative distance. States nearer the threat are more likely to engage in balancing than are more distant states.⁴⁸ This is very intuitive and not dependent on whether one takes a more defensive or aggressive stance as regards the consequences of anarchy. Because the ability to project power declines with distance, states that are nearby pose a greater threat than those that are far away. Other things being equal, therefore,

⁴⁷ Stuart J. Kaufman, Richard Little and William C. Wohlforth, "Conclusion: Theoretical Insights from the Study of World History," *The Balance of Power in World History*, ed. Kaufman, Little and Wohlforth, 228, 232.

⁴⁸ Wohlforth, Kaufman and Little, "Introduction," 3.

states are more likely to make their alliance choices in response to nearby powers than in response to those that are distant.⁴⁹

Mearsheimer agrees:

“Great powers that share a border with an aggressor are likely to feel particularly vulnerable to attack, and thus they are likely to take matters into their own hands and balance... on the other hand, threatened states separated from an aggressor by a barrier are likely to feel less vulnerable to invasion and therefore more inclined to pass the buck to an endangered state that has a common border with the menacing state. Thus, among threatened states, those that live next door to the aggressor usually get stuck with the buck, while those more distant from the threat usually get to pass the buck. There is some truth to the dictum that geography is destiny”.⁵⁰

So it is important to observe whether the threatened state shares a border with the aggressor. But not any border, because if there is a geographical barrier, such as a large body of water, the effect would be the same.⁵¹ In sum, if a threatened state is separated from its adversary by the territory of another state, a large body of water or a territorial buffer zone, then it is more likely to pass the buck.

A second element is the distribution of capabilities. More powerful states are more likely to engage in balancing than are weaker states.⁵² Weak states bordering a potential hegemon may be so vulnerable that they choose to bandwagon rather than balance, especially if a powerful neighbor has demonstrated its ability to compel obedience.⁵³

Mearsheimer considers that threatened states usually prefer buck-passing to balancing, because the buck-passer avoids the costs of fighting the aggressor in the event of war.⁵⁴ Logically,

⁴⁹ Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013) 23.

⁵⁰ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 271-272.

⁵¹ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 271-272.

⁵² Wohlforth, Kaufman and Little, “Introduction,” 18-19. Cf. Walt, *Origins of Alliance*, 29: In general, the weaker the state, the more likely it is to bandwagon rather than balance.

⁵³ Walt, *Origins of Alliance*, 24.

⁵⁴ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 139.

weaker states would rather pass the buck than balance. But Mearsheimer goes even further and claims that the strategy for the weak is bandwagoning:

“If a state is badly outgunned by a rival, it makes no sense to resist its demands, because that adversary will take what it wants by force anyway and inflict considerable punishment in the process. Bandwagoning is employed mainly by minor powers that stand alone against hostile great powers. They have no choice but to give in to the enemy, because they are weak and isolated.”⁵⁵

In any case, the conclusion is that when a state is weak, the probability of balancing is inversely proportional to distance. It can either pass the buck, or bandwagon, but it is less likely to engage in balancing. Once more, one does not have to subscribe to offensive realism to concede the plausibility of this argument. No matter how strong the general incentive for balancing may be, weak states can only do so much. Table 1 sums up the previous arguments.

	Less distant	More distant
Weak states	Less likely to balance (rather pass the buck or even bandwagon)	Less likely to balance (rather pass the buck)
Strong states	More likely to balance	More likely to pass the buck

Table 1. Balancing, distance and power

My point is that when one studies a specific regional system, it is not so meaningful to inquire into general patterns of balance-of-power or hegemony throughout history. Instead, one can look for the specific predictions for balancing in relation to relative geographical proximity, buffer zones, and distribution of capabilities and then apply it to that regional system, in order to determine whether balancing is more likely to occur or not. If it turns out that balancing is relatively less likely to occur, then one could conclude that a potential hegemon would face smaller costs in its attempt to change the system. In other words, it would have more incentives to expand.

An environment where a regional potential hegemon has more incentives to expand than to restrain itself is an environment for offensive realism. Defensive realist considerations do not

⁵⁵ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 163.

help much, because even defensive realism concedes that relatively more distant states or states isolated from the aggressor would rather not balance, and relatively smaller states closer to the aggressor would rather not balance as well. In chapter 5 I will argue that this is precisely the case of South America.

For the sake of argument, let us now compare the merits of offensive realism against a non-realist approach such as democratic peace theory.⁵⁶ I do not even need to disprove democratic peace theory to make my point. Much on the contrary, let us assume that there is some degree of truth in democratic peace theory, even in its restricted form, i.e. democracies do not wage war against each other.

Most of South American countries, for example, have experienced a wave of democratization in the 1980s, which has more or less endured until present day. Are we to conclude that their ministries of defense should simply be dismantled by merits of democratic peace theory? Are we to assume we entered into some sort of “post-realist” era where intentions can be assumed peaceful?

Even in that case, it would only take a military coup d'état and the establishment of a new autocracy in one or more of those states to go back to the previous realist era of uncertainty and security dilemma. In other words, even if democratic peace theory was correct in an “explanatory” sense, it is hardly a reliable guideline for foreign policy, because nobody can assure that a military coup d'état is completely off the question.

In this chapter I have tried to justify the choice of offensive realism as a tool for studying broad patterns of international politics in South American system. The next chapter is a methodological one, where I explain how the premises of offensive realism are utilized to project future scenarios for the region.

⁵⁶ For democratic peace theory, see for example Jeff Pugh, “Democratic Peace Theory: A Review and Evaluation,” *CEMPROC Occasional Paper Series*, Apr. 2005; Toni A. Pazienza, “Challenging the Democratic Peace Theory. The Role of the U.S.-China Relationship,” MA Thesis, University of South Florida, 25 Mar. 2014.

2. Methodology and method

This chapter has three sections. In the first section I define the scenario methodology as a future counterfactual narrative and introduce the concepts of driving forces, contextual conditions and critical uncertainties. In the second section I provide some examples of scenarios in IR and geopolitics literature. Finally, I present the possible future scenarios for South America that will be the subject of following chapters.

2.1. Preparing scenario analysis

This thesis uses scenario analysis for its methodology. There are many ways to approach the concept of scenario. For instance, Herman Kahn describes scenarios as “attempts to describe in some detail a hypothetical sequence of events that could lead plausibly to the situation envisaged.” Peter Schwartz defines scenarios as “stories about the way the world might turn out tomorrow, stories that can help us recognize and adapt to changing aspects of our present environment”.⁵⁷ Dong-Ho Han refers to the scenario-building methodology as a means by which people can articulate different futures with trends, uncertainties, and rules over a certain amount of time. In this way, scenario thinking enables decision makers to make an important decision at the present time.⁵⁸

Gaub and Laban observe that scenarios are not only a description of possible future situations but also of the pathways leading there, and that insofar they come with an explanation of how the projected future came about, they reduce speculation.⁵⁹ Finally, Oppenheimer considers that alternate scenarios present plausible and distinctive futures that, among other things, improve early recognition of emerging trends and can serve as alternate platforms for evaluating the sustainability of current policies.⁶⁰

It is important however to bear in mind that scenarios are not predictions. Gaub and Laban warn that “future studies can never claim to accurately *predict* a certain future.”⁶¹ Oppenheimer

⁵⁷ Kahn and Schwartz cited in Han, “Scenario Constructions...,” 40-41.

⁵⁸ Han, “Scenario Constructions,” 41-42

⁵⁹ Florence Gaub and Alexandra Laban (eds.), “Arab futures: Three scenarios for 2025,” *Issue*, 2015: 7.

⁶⁰ Oppenheimer, “From Prediction to Recognition,” 19-31.

⁶¹ Gaub and Laban, “Arab Futures,” 5. Cursives on the original.

not only concurs, but adds that “quite the contrary, scenarios are intended to deconstruct predictions that force-fit analysis to preferences or other forms of bias.”⁶²

On their part, Junio and Mahnken answer to critics who suggest that scenarios constitute mere speculation regarding an unpredictable future. Scenarios assist scholars with developing testable hypothesis, gathering data, identifying a theory’s upper and lower bounds, articulating “world views,” setting new research agendas, and avoiding cognitive biases. Scenarios are also an effective way to teach students to apply theory to policy.⁶³

For the purposes of this thesis, I will follow the guidelines of Junio and Mahnken in their article *Conceiving of Future War....* Drawing on business literature, counterfactual methods work, and their own experiences, the authors offer “best practices for scenarios dedicated to the core interests of political scientists: developing and improving upon theory.”⁶⁴

Junio and Mahnken consider that scenarios are “counterfactual narratives about the future.” Moreover, scenarios “may be understood and applied through the existing and widely published framework of counterfactuals. Political scientists almost exclusively focus on historical counterfactuals, but future counterfactuals exist.” According to the authors, a historical counterfactual exists in the same logical space as a future counterfactual, and much of the background context for historical counterfactuals “may be reasonable assumed to be stable in the future.”⁶⁵

Junio and Mahnken describe six types of future counterfactuals: 1) narratives regarding future warfare; 2) political narratives, such as those regarding foreign policy or domestic politics in a country of foreign policy interest; 3) analysis of how scenarios were used in historical decision making; 4) theory extension, or the use of scenarios to demonstrate how a casual process could unfold; 5) theory development, or the use of scenarios to identify and understand specific causal relationships; 6) scenarios are sometimes developed using large data sets for quantitative projections of political trends. On this last type, Junio and Mahnken comment that researchers

⁶² Oppenheimer, “From Prediction to Recognition,” 26.

⁶³ Junio and Mahnken, “Conceiving of Future War,” 374-375; 385.

⁶⁴ Junio and Mahnken, “Conceiving of Future War,” 379.

⁶⁵ Junio and Mahnken, “Conceiving of Future War,” 374-376. The authors also notice that political scientists also use the word “scenario” to refer to behavior that is distinct from future counterfactuals. The most common is in game theoretic or formal modeling. Political scientists often refer to stages of a game, or the game itself, as a “scenario” (p. 378).

extrapolate historical and contemporary numerical data to create visions of the future and then assess the political implications of living in that kind of world.⁶⁶

Next, Junio and Mahnken offer a step-by-step guideline for the construction of scenarios, based on the following concepts: “types of scenario,” “driving forces,” “contextual conditions,” “critical uncertainties” and “plot lines.”

“Types of scenario:” In the absence of theory, an obvious use of scenarios is to develop, or at least to better understand the most important questions to ask. Conversely, in order to deduce the logical future from a current theory already in mind, one should look after a narrative that connects theoretical expectations with observed signals to project a future, for example, five years hence, or so.⁶⁷

“Driving forces,” to be deduced from the theory of interest. These “drivers” are the independent and intervening variables of interest to the researcher. They should be variables capable of taking on qualitative or quantitative measures.⁶⁸

Highly probable “contextual conditions” for the future narrative: assumptions and data (both qualitative and quantitative) that are of interest for the scenario, but are not key drivers. According to the authors, the explicit identification of contextual conditions usually does not include stating parts of the world that are extremely unlikely to change, such as the existence of the United States, but may well include assigning a value to something like the US force disposition in the world.⁶⁹

“Critical uncertainties” are low-probability, high impact outcomes that may follow from the theory, independent variables and context. These outcomes should be logically deduced from the theory and would have dramatic effects on the value of the dependent variable of interest, and

⁶⁶ Junio and Mahnken, “Conceiving of Future War,” 377-378.

⁶⁷ Junio and Mahnken, “Conceiving of Future War,” 380.

⁶⁸ Junio and Mahnken, “Conceiving of Future War,” 380. Cf. Han, “Scenario Constructions,” 42: “Driving forces are defined as the causal problems that surround a problem, event or decision, which could be many factors, including those that can be the basis, in different combinations, for diverse chains of connections and outcomes (...) In a word, driving forces constitute the basic structure of each scenario plot line in the scenario-making process.”

⁶⁹ Junio and Mahnken, “Conceiving of Future War,” 381.

would be plausible. The idea is to avoid surprise by anticipating theoretically consistent low-probability outcomes.⁷⁰

“Plot lines” which develop the central logic of a scenario, and connect the drivers and theoretical expectations of causation.⁷¹

Once all this is ready, the next step is to write the scenario, which should be explicit in its identification of all the elements aforementioned.

2.2 Comparing scenarios

In this section I present some previous applications of the scenario analysis methodology to which I have paid attention in order to build my own scenario for this thesis. Some of these are explicit scenario building, some others are not.

For example, the Center for Global Affairs has published a series of scenario workgroups on Iraq, Iran, China, Turkey, Russia and Ukraine. The Russia Scenarios workshop, to mention one, offers three scenarios for Russia in 2020: “Working Authoritarianism,” “Bottom-up liberalization and modernization,” and “Degeneration.” Some drivers common to the three scenarios are identified: domestic politics, global economic trends, and diversification and economic reform. Others are specific of each scenario, such as ethnic conflict in the third one.⁷²

On their part, Gaub and Laban present in *Arab futures...* three potential futures for the Arab world in 2025. The report takes into account projections based to the maximum extent possible on available data. It identifies larger trends so-called “megatrends,” i.e. relative certainties which are not likely to change, be countered or turned around over the next decade and define the “possibility space of the future.” These projected megatrends are demographic growth, urbanization, climate change and reliance on hydrocarbon sector, vulnerability to food prices, increase in literacy rates

⁷⁰ Junio and Mahnken, “Conceiving of Future War,” 381. Cf. Han, “Scenario Constructions,” 42-43: “Critical uncertainties describe important determinants of events whose character, magnitude or consequences are unknown. Exploring critical uncertainties lies at the heart of the scenario construction in the sense that the most important task of scenario analysts is to discover the elements that are most uncertain and most important to a specific decision or event.”

⁷¹ Junio and Mahnken, “Conceiving of Future War,” 381. Cf. Han, “Scenario Constructions,” 43: “A scenario plot line is a compelling story about how things happen and it describes how driving forces might plausibly behave as they interact with predetermined elements and different combinations of critical uncertainties.”

⁷² Center for Global Affairs, “Russia 2020,” *CGA Scenarios*, no. 4, spring 2010.

and internet penetration, and a slow progress in gender equality. It defines “game-changers” as those areas where policy-makers will influence the course of events by their choices. These are youth unemployment, dependence on volatile food prices, insecurity, democratic change and inclusiveness. Lastly, it considers “wild cards,” i.e. events with a high impact but a low probability, which as a result contain a strong element of strategic surprise: chemical weapons in the hands of a non-state actor, the fall of the House of Saud, a war between Saudi Arabia and Iran, an energy technology revolution, etc. Wild cards are sometimes known also as “Black Swan events.” The three potential futures are labelled “Arab Simmer,” “Arab Implosion,” and “Arab Leap.” The first is considered the most plausible, the second is the most plausible worst-case scenario and the third is the most optimistic.⁷³

In the terminology of Gaub and Laban, “megatrends” are analogous to “driving forces” and “game-changers” to “critical uncertainties.” To understand this comparison, I find useful to think about it this way: the “driving forces” are the known predetermined elements, whereas “critical uncertainties” can be conceived as the locus of the question “What if?” that opens the way for counterfactuals.

Consider the following example: Mearsheimer’s article “Why the Soviets Can’t Win Quickly in Central Europe.” This is a case of narrative regarding future warfare: Mearsheimer’s aim was to examine the Soviets’ prospects back then for effecting a blitzkrieg against NATO. Mearsheimer mentions the distribution of material capabilities, i.e. the balance of forces in terms of manpower, weapons, reinforcement and mobilization.⁷⁴

However, the driving forces in his analysis are not so much those neorealist variables but specific matters of strategic military doctrine. The contextual conditions are the deployment pattern of NATO forces in West Germany territory and the characteristics of the terrain. There are also some critical uncertainties. There is the assumption that NATO is able to mobilize its forces in due time, immediately after the Warsaw Pact starts mobilizing (strategic warning plus political decision). The other critical uncertainty stands as a limitation of the scenario as well, and refers to the fact that the study does not consider the impact of air forces on the balance. Interestingly

⁷³ Gaub and Laban, “Arab Futures.”

⁷⁴ John J. Mearsheimer, “Why the Soviets Can’t Win Quickly in Central Europe,” *International Security* 7, no. 1, summer 1982: 3-39.

enough, what once was an exercise on future counterfactuals has become an exercise on past counterfactuals.

Finally, I would like to offer an example from classical geopolitical literature. Even though the methodology is never explicitly mentioned, it can be argued that Halford J. Mackinder uses some sort of scenario analysis in his famous 1904 article “The Geographical Pivot of History.”⁷⁵ Mackinder interprets world history as a recurrent confrontation between land powers and sea powers. He emphasizes the centrality of place and the efficient movement of ideas, goods, and people.⁷⁶ During the so-called Columbian Age, the Atlantic-facing maritime empires of Western Europe dominated much of the known world, assisted by the superior mobility and flexibility of maritime as opposed to land transportation.⁷⁷

However, at the beginning of the post-Columbian epoch the balance of advantage was beginning to tip in favor of the land. Maritime mobility was now being challenged by continental mobility brought about by the development of transcontinental railways.⁷⁸ Railways were to replace horse and camel mobility, and their effect was to be felt at most in the vast spaces of Eurasia, laying within the Russian Empire and Mongolia. Their potentialities in population and wealth amount to a vast economic world which would permit the pivot power that controls it to stand within reach of an empire of the world.⁷⁹

Translated into scenario terminology, there are 1) driving forces: those historical forces that compel land and sea forces to confront one another; 2) contextual conditions: the geographical features of Eurasia, such as the Arctic ice in the north and the vast spaces of the Heartland, plentiful of wealth; the superiority of maritime transportation; 3) critical uncertainties: the game-changing implications of transcontinental railways, which will allow to alter the balance of land power mobility and sea power mobility in favor of the former; 4) potential futures: a pivot state controlling the lands of Eurasia and its vast continental resources for fleet-building will be able to

⁷⁵ Halford J. Mackinder, “The Geographical Pivot of History,” *The Geographical Journal* 23, no. 4, Apr. 1904: 421-437.

⁷⁶ Saul Bernard Cohen, *Geopolitics of the World System* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003) 13.

⁷⁷ Colin S. Gray, *The Geopolitics of Super Power* (The University Press of Kentucky, 1988) 7.

⁷⁸ Ciro E. Zoppo, “Classical Geopolitics and Beyond,” *On Geopolitics: Classical and Nuclear*, ed. Ciro E. Zoppo and Charles Zorgbibe (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1985) 4-5.

⁷⁹ Mackinder, “The Geographical Pivot of History,” 434-436.

control the world. Technological developments, therefore, open the way for a future counterfactual in which history shall not repeat itself as in the previous Columbian Age.

The advantage of conceiving Mackinder's vision as a future counterfactual is that it allows us to settle the issue of its alleged determinism. Future counterfactuals are not predictions but devices to answer the question "What if?" In words of Oppenheimer, they make decision makers more receptive to early warning signs of new trends.⁸⁰

If the same reasoning were to be applied to other geopolitical works such as those of Douhet and De Seversky regarding command of the air, one could conclude that most of classical geopolitics is essentially about scenarios.

2.3 Offensive realism scenarios for South America

The following chapters will elaborate further on the different plausible futures that scenario methodology provides for South American regional system.

Chapter 3 deals with the driving forces leading to the rise of Brazil. These are the international-level independent variables of offensive realism: distribution of power and relative material capabilities. Distribution of power refers to the place of the state in international relations. It considers political and military alliances, as well as regional integration processes. Relative material capabilities are latent power and military power, as defined in chapter 1. Latent power is primarily based on GDP growth and population size. I will qualify latent power even further by adding other indicators such as urban population, iron and steel production, energy consumption, and education level. The last factor is particularly critical because it is related to the eventual effectiveness of Brazilian military forces. For the purposes of this thesis it is assumed that Brazil is a relatively efficient state able to mobilize its resources and make optimal use of them. Of course, the reality might well be different from that ideal picture. For that reason, the last section of chapter 3 addresses certain limitations of this approach.

The first critical uncertainty for South American scenario is the presence and role of United States as a regional hegemon in the Americas. Any offensive realist account of a Brazilian attempt

⁸⁰ Oppenheimer, "From Prediction to Recognition," 26.

at South American hegemony has to deal with the role of the United States as an offshore balancer. It is expected that the United States, as the only regional hegemon in the world, will try to check any potential candidate in other regions, even more so in its own backyard. However, this should not be taken for granted. Is it possible to imagine an underachieving intervention by the United States? What if intervention does not take place at all? Chapter 4 will introduce offensive realism theorizing on offshore balancing. In doing so, it will argue why the role of the United States is in fact a critical uncertainty for South American future. For example, United States could face much more pressing concerns related to China in East Asia. With the eyes of the regional hegemon focused elsewhere, Brazil could have a window of opportunity to make its move.

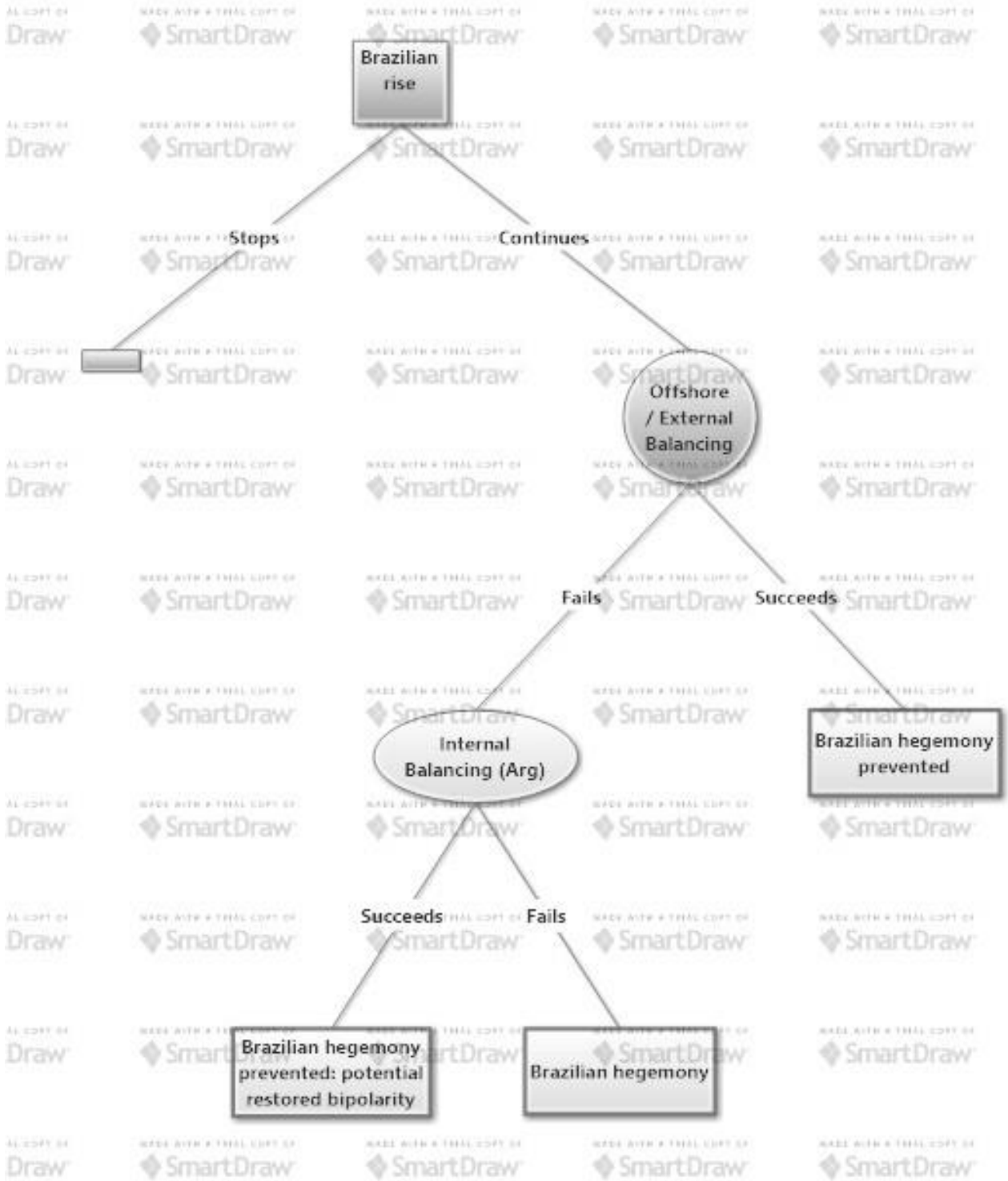
If the South American states are left on their own, one alternative is to present an external balancing coalition against the potential regional hegemon. Chapter 5 deals with the prospects for external balancing. Both offensive realism and geopolitics play a role in this chapter. The geographical features of South America stand as a contextual condition, in the same manner as the geography of Eurasia stood in Mackinder's pivot thesis. Particular attention is paid to the Amazonia as a buffer zone and its implications as regards incentives for balancing.

Success in offshore or external balancing would result in one of the possible future scenarios for South America: "Brazilian hegemony prevented." However, chapters 4 and 5 will leave a warning against blind reliance on this result.

If both offshore and external balancing prove underachieving, Argentina will have to tackle Brazilian attempt at hegemony with a balancing of its own. Chapter 6 is about internal balancing. It applies neoclassical realist theories by Schweller and Taliaferro in order to evaluate the main challenges and options of Argentinean decision makers. At this point there will be two possible future scenarios, depending on whether internal balancing succeeds or not. These are "Brazilian hegemony prevented, and potential restored bipolarity," and "Brazilian hegemony," respectively.

It is worth paying attention finally to at least one wild card, i.e. an event of high impact but low probability. Chapter 7 considers the re-nuclearization of South America, as a consequence of Brazil or Argentina abandoning the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Treaty of Tlatelolco, and how this black swan event would impact on an offensive realist scenario for the region.

Tree diagram. Brazilian rise and scenarios



Wild card: Nuclear weapons

3. South America and the rise of Brazil

The two previous chapters discussed and established the theoretical framework and the methodology of this thesis. It is now to turn focus on the rise of Brazil and its candidacy as regional hegemon in South America. However, before doing that, it is necessary, in order to avoid any confusion, to define specifically the regional system in which Brazil would be hegemon, and distinguish it from other regional conceptions.

The first section of this chapter, therefore, discusses the merits of conceiving the entire South American continent as a regional system. Once this is done, the second section will address the relative material capabilities of the region, taking into account GDP, population, military personnel, military expenditure, steel production, and primary energy consumption.

The third section discusses the distribution of power. Here I take into account not only the hierarchy of powers but also the military alliances and regional organizations. The fourth section will discuss specifically the meaning of a Brazilian hegemony. There is the traditional view that Brazil's natural strategy rests on diplomacy and soft power. I challenge that assumption and ask whether the restraint shown hitherto is more an issue of capabilities rather than a peaceful spirit.

The fifth section, finally, is about the limitations of Brazil and at the same time of this scenario approach. The assumption is that Brazil is able to mobilize and allocate its resources optimally, but this is of course the ideal situation. Here I show how reality may differ.

3.1. The South American Regional System

The concept of South American continent as a regional system is not as self-evident as it seems at first glance, because there are other alternate conceptions in the literature of cultural geography and geopolitics.

The notion of Latin America needs no presentation. A vast region stretching from Mexico to Tierra del Fuego and encompassing the successor states of the territories of Spanish and Portuguese empires, and as a consequence with presumed cultural similarities, such as language and religion, which is fundamentally distinct from "Anglo-America" in the north.

On the other hand, geopolitical literature presents another more curious definition of South America. Saul Bernard Cohen and Robert D. Kaplan establish a hemispheric divide in the line of the northern Andes-Columbian Cordilleras and the southern Venezuelan-Guiana Highlands that border the Amazon. These physical accidents separate South America from Middle America. One argument is that the Panama Canal has made easier for northwestern South America (i.e. Colombia) to communicate with the Caribbean and the North Atlantic than overland with the rest of South America.⁸¹

Contrary to these two options, Teixeira argues that geographic proximity and patterns of interaction constitute the necessary and sufficient variables for the identification of a regional subsystem. Forms of interaction include diplomatic, political, social, economic, cultural and personal interactions, and its instruments can be diplomatic, psychological, cultural, economic or military. Its range goes from conflictual to cooperative. Neighboring states will tend to exhibit a relatively high degree of interaction. It is possible to evaluate patterns of interactions by means of three variables: wars and/or armed conflicts, trade, and regional organizations.⁸²

When one looks at patterns of conflict, it is evident that it makes sense to distinguish South American continent as a whole different regional subsystem. There were armed conflicts in South America and armed conflicts in Central America, but never an inter-American level conflict. The great majority of conflicts were between direct neighbors over border issues, and belong to the era of state formation in South America. The War of the Pacific, for instance, took place from 1879 to 1883, with Bolivia and Peru on one side and Chile on the other. The bitterest conflict was the War of the Triple Alliance (1864-1870) between Paraguay and the Triple Alliance of Argentina, the Empire of Brazil, and Uruguay. In the twentieth century, there was the Chaco War (1932-1935) between Bolivia and Paraguay, and some brief and localized border clashes between Ecuador and Peru in 1941 and 1995. I will return to the issue of South American conflicts in chapter 5.

Patterns of trade and regional organizations also seem to confirm the singularity of South America. Attempts to create inter-American economic organizations in the past were relatively fruitless, whereas South America itself has witnessed the formation of Mercosur and the Andean

⁸¹ Saul Bernard Cohen, *Geopolitics*, 363. See also: Robert D. Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography* (New York: Random House, 2012) 92-94.

⁸² Carlos Gustavo Poggio Teixeira, *Brazil, the United States, and the South American Subsystem: Regional Politics and the Absent Empire* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012) 27-29.

Community. Of course, the Alliance of the Pacific and the Trans-Pacific Partnership represent challenges to this argument. However, it needs to be taken into account that the United States failed in 2005 when it tried to create a Free Trade Area of the Americas.

Since the role of the United States in South America is one of the key elements in this thesis, the last factor mentioned above is particularly relevant. In this sense, Buzan and Wæver comment: “US engagement (in South America) is not constant and the United States neither rules the region nor even generally shapes it. South America basically has its own dynamics into which the USA intervenes irregularly.” This is not to deny that the relationship between the United States and South America is highly asymmetrical. However, the contrast between the overt operations in Central America and the Caribbean, and covert operations in South America such as in Chile in 1973 show that the United States level of penetration in South America is considerably lower.⁸³

The last argument for the singularity of South America as a regional unit of its own is the presence of Brazil. Brazil is the country that connects the Southern Cone with the northern part of the continent and gives coherence to the subsystem. Brazil connects the La Plata basin, the Andes, and the Amazon region. Brazil holds the South American regional system altogether, and it is thus justified to include the northern countries of South America in it. Another way to think about it is to imagine what South America would look like if Brazil had fragmented into several smaller republics,⁸⁴ as it once was feared by Brazilians (see below). The next section is directly related to this since it is about relative material capabilities in South America.

3.2 Relative material capabilities

The Federative Republic of Brazil is located in the east of South America, bordering the Atlantic Ocean. It shares common boundaries with every South American country except Chile and Ecuador. It is the world’s fifth largest country and the largest in South America by geographical area and population.⁸⁵

⁸³ Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers. The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 309.

⁸⁴ Poggio Teixeira, *Brazil, the United States...*, 34, 36

⁸⁵ The World Bank, “World Development Indicators.”

However, during the first half of the twentieth century, the GDP of Brazil was always equal or slightly inferior to Argentina's. Colombia caught up with Chile to compete closely by the third position, albeit both were very distant from Argentina and Brazil. In terms of percentage, Argentina and Brazil averaged each one 30% of the region during this period. Later on the century, and thanks to oil revenues, Venezuela would take the third position. However, the most dramatic change would take place in the first two positions (see table 2 below).

As a consequence of its neutral status during Second World War, Argentina was marginalized from U.S. Lend-Lease policy, and with it, financial and economic assistance to the region. This fact altered the existing balance of power in South America, which prior to Second World War was favorable to Argentina. Brazil, on the contrary, in retribution for its collaboration with the Allies, received via Lend-Lease more than two thirds of the war assistance destined to Latin America, becoming then the first military power in South America. But the United States also gave Brazil the sum of US\$ 100 million via Export-Import Bank with the objective of mobilizing productive resources, and an additional US\$ 45 million loan for the steel mill of Volta Redonda.⁸⁶

Naturally, this is not to say that this episode is the only explanatory variable of the subsequent rise of Brazil and the decadence of Argentina. Several other internal factors in both countries should be taken into account. But it is hard to ignore the fact that during the first half of the twentieth century, Brazil had a policy of accommodating the United States, whereas Argentina was more openly confrontational in many aspects, and the turning point in the South American balance of power took place immediately after the end of Second World War, when United States became undoubtedly the first great power in the world and its first rule-maker.⁸⁷

From 1950 on, Brazil took the lead and each decade the difference with Argentina was bigger. By 1975 Brazil's GDP was two times the size of Argentina's, and more than twice after 1985 (see table 2). According to some authors, this is the threshold after which South American

⁸⁶ Andrés Cisneros, Carlos Escudé et. al., *Historia de las Relaciones Exteriores Argentinas*, 2000, Dec. 2015 <http://www.argentina-rree.com/9/9-022.htm>.

⁸⁷ See also Carlos Escudé, *Principios de Realismo Periférico. Una teoría argentina y su vigencia ante el ascenso de China* (Buenos Aires: Lumiere, 2012) 141-163; Carlos Escudé, "El protectorado argentino y su indefensión actual: un análisis desde el realismo periférico," Congreso de FLACSO/ISA, Buenos Aires, Jul. 2014: 8-12.

system turned from bipolar to unipolar.⁸⁸ One can ask if it is a coincidence that MERCOSUR was born at this moment.

Year	Argentina	Brazil
1905	19.702,886	14.365,000
1915	26.183,334	19.688,000
1925	40.597,244	30.556,000
1935	51.523,918	42.722,000
1945	67.042,120	64.236,000
1955	99.125,000	118.960,000
1965	141.960,000	203.444,000
1975	211.850,000	455.918,000
1985	209.641,000	675.090,000
1995	282.653,000	866.086,000
2005	353.381,000	1.110.868,000
2014	537.700,000	2.417.000,000

Table 2. GDP Levels (million US\$ Dollars, Argentina and Brazil. 1905-2014⁸⁹)

In any case, as of 2013, Argentina's share of South American GDP was reduced to 12.5% (from circa 30% during 1900-1950) and Brazil's has risen to 55%. Moreover, Brazil is usually placed in the top ten of world's largest economies.⁹⁰

It is safe to assume that this tendency constitutes a megatrend, i.e. a relative certainty which is not likely to change, be countered or turned around over the next decade. Even if Brazil enters

⁸⁸ Luis Leandro Schenoni, "The Brazilian Rise and the Elusive South American Balance," *GIGA Working Papers* 269, Mar. 2015: 4.

⁸⁹ Data from 1905 to 2005 is 1990 international Geary-Khamis dollars. Angus Maddison, *Historical Statistics on Population, GDP and Per Capita GDP for 1-2008 AD Period*, 2010, 18 Apr. 2016 <<http://knoema.es/HWE/historical-statistics-of-the-world-economy-1-2008-ad>>; Data of 2014 is current dollars, The World Bank, *Data by Country*, 2016, 18 Apr 2016 <<http://data.worldbank.org/country/argentina>>, <<http://data.worldbank.org/country/brazil>>.

⁹⁰ *The World Factbook 2013-14* (Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2013), 18 Apr. 2016 <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>>.

into an economic crisis with impact on its GDP growth in absolute terms, there is considerable margin in the gap with the rest of the countries so that distance in relative terms will not diminish.

The same reasoning applies to population growth. As of 2016, Brazil's population of 204,519,000 constitutes 49.36% of South American population. By 2030, Brazil's population is expected to reach 240 million and maintain the same proportion.⁹¹ Urban population in Brazil has duplicated since 1980 and continues to grow.⁹²

Therefore, megatrends of GDP growth and population growth, the two main indicators of latent power according to Mearsheimer's offensive realism, are clearly favorable to Brazil. They constitute the driving forces of Brazilian rise to hegemony in South America, because they are the foundation of military power.

Brazil has reduced its military personnel, from 450,000 in 1980 to 288,000 in 2007, but this is mainly a consequence of the end of the military regime and the return to democracy. The same tendency took place in Argentina. However, according to CENM's estimations on military balance, total military personnel was 337,400 in 2013, about 30% of South America's total. On the other hand, military expenditure soared from US\$ 2,019,334 to US\$ 20,559,000 in 2007, and US\$ 32,449,492 in 2013, amounting to more than 50% of regional expenditures.⁹³

As regards steel production, it began in the 1920s. Its biggest leap forward came at the end of the 1940s with the creation of state Companhia Siderúrgica Nacional (CSN) and the U.S. loan for Volta Redonda, as it was mentioned above. State participated in most steel producing companies until the 1990s, when a privatization process was initialized. As of today, Brazil has 29 steel mills, and is the ninth largest producer of steel in the world. In 2013, Brazil produced 34.2 million tons of steel, which amounts to 70% of production in South America.⁹⁴ Finally, when it comes to primary energy consumption, Brazil demanded 12.09546 Quadrillion Btu, i.e. 48.75% of the region in 2012.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Maddison, *Historical Statistics on Population*.

⁹² Singer, Bremer and Stuckey, "Capability Distribution..."

⁹³ See chapter 5, table 3.

⁹⁴ Igor Utsumi, "Brazilian Steel Industry," *The Brazil Business*, 19 May 2014.

⁹⁵ See chapter 5, table 3.

3.3 Distribution of power

According to Cohen, the state system consists of five orders or levels. The first consists of major powers. The second order are regional powers whose reach extends over much of their respective geopolitical regions. The third, fourth and fifth levels are those states whose reach is generally limited to part of their regions only. Cohen also distinguishes three categories of second-order regional powers: high, medium and low.⁹⁶

Cohen considers Brazil as an example of a high second-order power which has regional hegemonic aspirations and is likely to achieve dominance over its region (the other one being India). Argentina is an example of a low second-order power. Chile, Colombia and Venezuela are ranked third-order states. They can influence regional events in special ways and may compete with neighboring regional powers on ideological and political grounds, or by having a specialized resource base. The vast oil resources of Venezuela are a clear example. However, they lack the population, military, and general economic capacities of second-order rivals. Ecuador (and Peru, probably) is a fourth-order state who has impact only on their nearest neighbors. Fifth-order states have only marginal external involvement. Guyana and Suriname stand as a clear example thereof.⁹⁷

In regard to the United States, which is obviously a first-order power in terms of Cohen, Buzan and Wæver argue that as long as there is no such a thing as an all-encompassing western hemisphere “regional security complex,”⁹⁸ the United States stand as an external actor to South America. It is true that the United States have been for the last century the only major external actor in South America. However, US visions for a regional system were regularly rejected by South American governments. Moreover, US interventions south of the Panama Canal have been sporadic at best, the 1973 Chile operation being perhaps the most known example.

I have already made reference to the major interstate wars in South America. These have been sporadic though, something I will go back to in chapter 5. Buzan and Wæver offer a list of interstate controversies. The central one is, of course, Brazil-Argentina. Questions of status (leadership in the region) and direct balance of power and competition for influence in the three buffer states between them. Brazil has traditionally feared encirclement by Spanish America led

⁹⁶ Cohen, *Geopolitics of the World System*, 46-48.

⁹⁷ Cohen, *Geopolitics of the World System*, 48.

⁹⁸ For a definition of regional security complex, see Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and powers*, 44.

by Argentina, and Argentina has traditionally feared Brazilian expansionism. This fear was historically shared also by Uruguay, Paraguay and Peru.⁹⁹ When it comes to external allies, Buzan and Wæver observe that the United States often gave Brazil preferential treatment and Spanish America saw Brazil acting as U.S. regional lieutenant, using American assistance to become dominant in the region.¹⁰⁰ (The United States that according to offensive realism is supposed to act as an off-shore balancer.)

John Child offers a review of Argentina's concerns¹⁰¹ about: Brazilian expansion into the buffer states and also with Argentina's own national territory, especially the province of Misiones;¹⁰² the nature of the Brazilian-U.S. relationship, by which Brazil is a satellite nation,¹⁰³ and so on.

The next category of interstate controversies include border disagreements between medium-sized states, in the form of dyads: Argentina-Chile, Chile-Bolivia, Chile-Peru, Peru-Ecuador, Colombia-Venezuela, Guyana-Venezuela, and of course, Argentina-Great Britain over the Malvinas/Falkland Islands.¹⁰⁴ Historically, there were no formal alliances, but informal ententes following a checkboard pattern along the rivalries aforementioned. Therefore Argentina would sympathize with Peru, Chile would sympathize with Ecuador and Brazil, and so on.

The fact that the United States have been for the last century the only major external actor in South America is generally attributed, as everybody knows, to the 1823 Monroe Doctrine. Mearsheimer, for example, explains that the United States established regional hegemony in the nineteenth century by "minimizing the influence of the United Kingdom and the other European great powers in the Americas, a policy commonly known as the Monroe Doctrine."¹⁰⁵ Buzan and Wæver, however, argue that this "ritual reference" is misleading, insofar as Latin America was actually not a major interest at the time and the United States did not really have the naval power necessary to enforce the Monroe Doctrine against the European countries of the Holy Alliance.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁹ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and powers*, 314-315.

¹⁰⁰ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 314.

¹⁰¹ John Child, "Geopolitical Thinking in Latin America," *Latin American Research Review* 14, no. 2, 1979: 89-111.

¹⁰² Juan E. Guglielmelli, "Argentina frente al Operativo Misiones del Brasil," *Estrategia*, Nov.1972-Feb. 1973: 19-20.

¹⁰³ Julio E. Sanguinetti, "Geopolítica de la Cuenca del Plata," *Estrategia*, Nov. 1972-Feb.1973: 72-76.

¹⁰⁴ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 315-316.

¹⁰⁵ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 239.

¹⁰⁶ Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 307.

On his part, Poggio Teixeira examines the evolution of the Monroe Doctrine beyond its original promulgation in 1823 and corroborates that, rather than being a policy directed to Latin America as a whole, the Monroe Doctrine, and the Roosevelt Corollary later, were in fact Caribbean in scope; moreover, Brazil in particular considered itself as a guarantor of the Monroe Doctrine in South America, by means of an “unwritten alliance” with the United States. According to Poggio Teixeira, this was not entirely reciprocated, but it was still convenient for the United States, in particular after Argentina adopted a strong anti-U.S. foreign policy at the beginning of twentieth century.¹⁰⁷

In any case, if one had to mention a hemispheric defense agreement in the spirit of Monroe Doctrine, one can but make reference to the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (TIAR by the Spanish-language acronym), also known as the Rio Treaty or the Rio Pact, signed in 1947. Most of American states are or were at some point members, with the notable exception of Canada. The treaty was invoked several times, the last one being in 2001 after the September 11 attacks. On occasion of Malvinas War, the United States, along with Chile and Colombia, had argued that Argentina was the aggressor and stood aside. This episode turned TIAR into dead letter in the eyes of the rest of Latin American countries. Citing this example, Mexico formally withdrew in 2002.¹⁰⁸ The ALBA countries Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Venezuela withdrew in 2012.

From 2000 on, Brazil began to create a regional architecture of its own that excluded the United States. In 2001, President Fernando Henrique Cardoso proposed to South American Presidents a South American Initiative for Regional Infrastructure Integration (IIRSA) with support from the Brazilian development bank BNDES. In 2008, the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) was created: a new regional security council that not only excluded the United States, but also Canada, Mexico and Central America, which were seen as too close to the United States. Most recently, Brazil has worked to create the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) which excludes the United States and Canada.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Poggio Teixeira, *Brazil, the United States...*, 50.

¹⁰⁸ Ricardo Sennes, Janina Onuk and Amacio Jorge de Oliveira, “The Brazilian foreign policy and the hemispheric security,” *Revista Fuerzas Armadas y Sociedad*, 3, no. 4, Jul.-Dec. 2004: 3-26.

¹⁰⁹ Harold Trinkunas, “Brazil’s Rise: Seeking Influence on Global Governance,” *Latin America Initiative, Foreign Policy at Brookings*, Apr. 2014: 17.

However, the performance of these new multilateral institutions is limited at best. With limited budgets, personnel, and inconsistent leadership, they have “essentially devolved into opportunities for presidential summitry in the region,” providing forums for ad-hoc crisis resolutions or interpersonal negotiations rather than binding regimes. Moreover, even though Brazil successfully excluded the United States from UNASUR and CELAC, it was not able to persuade other states in the region from cooperating with United States. The strong U.S.-Colombian partnership is the best example.¹¹⁰

Will the time come when Brazil recurs to military power in South America to protect its interests or assert its leadership? The next section deals directly with this question.

3.4 Asserting regional leadership

Harold Trinkunas argues that Brazil’s aspirations to major power status have been a constant, but that its attempts to rise have failed historically due to lack of capabilities when presented with the available opportunities.¹¹¹

Brazil’s capabilities, in fact, have been those of a developing country for much of its history. It relied largely on commodity exports until it industrialized during and after World War II. However, it joined the allied cause in World War I as a co-belligerent and sought a permanent seat on the Council of the League of Nations. When that seat was granted to a defeated Germany, a disappointed Brazil withdrew from the League of Nations. In World War II, Brazil participated to a more significant extent, contributing an army division to the Italian front. In return, the United States not only contributed with financial aid, as it was mentioned before. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt advocated for Brazil’s permanent membership on the U.N. Security Council, an idea met with resistance from the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union. As of today, Brazil is one of four states advocating for a new permanent seat in the Security Council, alongside Germany, India, and Japan. Brazil has also joined the G-20 group of Finance and Economy Ministers, and has taken a leadership role in World Trade Organization and global climate change negotiations.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Trinkunas, “Brazil’s Rise,” 17-18.

¹¹¹ Trinkunas, “Brazil’s Rise,” 2.

¹¹² Trinkunas, “Brazil’s Rise,” 8-9, 12. See also Swart, “Timeline.”

On the South American regional level, Brazil has tried to foster its leadership by regional integration and multilateral diplomacy. Concrete moves towards regional integration commenced in the 1980s, with the negotiation of Mercosur, a new common market arrangement with Argentina (and also Paraguay and Uruguay), which transformed its traditional rival into a trade partner.¹¹³

Mercosur is often attributed to the re-democratization of Argentina and Brazil. A less idealistic, less liberal approach, more oriented toward material capabilities, would stress the point that by 1985 Brazil's GDP was already more than two times bigger than Argentina's, changing therefore the regional polarity from bipolar to unipolar.¹¹⁴

There is also the usual narrative of the peaceful character of Brazil. As Bertonha acknowledges, the two only major military actions of Brazil abroad were the War of the Triple Alliance and the involvement in Second World War, almost a century apart from one another. Since then, Brazil has only acted in peaceful international missions. Brazil has not been in a war against its neighbors for more than 140 years and its frontiers are consolidated.¹¹⁵ The only armed conflicts with Argentina were the Cisplatine War (1825-1828) and the Platine War (1851-1852), the latter caused by fear of expansionist plans by Argentina.

As it was mentioned at the end of previous section, even though Brazil was able to create a new regional architecture of multilateral institutions excluding the United States, these eventually proved underachieving due to lack of commitment and capacity to contain free-riding by the rest of South American states. In the words of Trinkunas, "Brazil's strategy of consensus and institutional building has only had limited success in persuading other states in South America to adhere to the new order."¹¹⁶

As a consequence, there are some Brazilians who begin to lose patience. In "Brazil: an emerging military power?....," Joao Fabio Bertonha wonders about the narrative of a benign Brazil inherently identified with "*dialog and continuous concessions*:"¹¹⁷ "There is the question of whether this is the posture assumed by the Brazilian elite or simply an option that has arisen out

¹¹³ Trinkunas, "Brazil's Rise," 16.

¹¹⁴ See ft. 88.

¹¹⁵ Joao Fábio Bertonha, "Brazil: an emerging military power? The problem of the use of force in Brazilian international relations in the 21st century, *Rev. Bras. Polít. Int.* 53, no. 2, 2010: 107-124.

¹¹⁶ Trinkunas, "Brazil's rise," 19.

¹¹⁷ Cursives are mine.

of circumstances, derived from the cold evaluation of Brazil's strategic possibilities." The author then mentions a conclusion by Alsina Jr.: the national tradition for non-confrontational politics "is also a reflection of weakness in national military power."¹¹⁸

According to Bertonha, the entire South-American union project, essential to the region's progress, can only be done with Brazil at the center and only the Brazilian leadership can deal with this project successfully. Unfortunately, "Brazil seems to hesitate when it has to use its power and influence to accelerate and keep this process running. (...) This wish to show goodwill may be seen as a weakness and no leadership can be seen in this light." The author goes on with concepts such as "renunciation of military hegemony," "a real capacity for intervention," and so on. Finally, he says,

This paper does not suggest bombing Montevideo city to prevent Uruguay from leaving Mercosur, obtaining Bolivian gas with a large army, or blocking Buenos Aires harbor in order to bring Argentina back into the Mercosur project. But a stronger position (even if the definition of 'strength' might be difficult) may be necessary to advance the integration project.¹¹⁹

Military power does not need to be used but it needs to be reliable. The acquisition of a reliable military capability would support Brazilian role as leader of the continent.¹²⁰ Bertonha concludes that "the premise that Brazil can grow to become one of the world's main powers without hegemony or domination is, at least, arguable," and a state with such aims "cannot just refuse to exert power."¹²¹

I would like to make a few points regarding the arguments of Bertonha. In the first place, of course, my strategy for this thesis is not to claim that Bertonha is somehow representative of the opinion of Brazilian elites, or that his article or any article of similar content circulates among the elites, or anything of the sort.

¹¹⁸ Bertonha, "Brazil: an emerging military power?" 110; Joao Paulo Soares Alsina Jr., "O poder militar como instrumento da política externa brasileira contemporânea," *Rev. Bras. Polít. Int.* 52, no. 2, 2009: 173-191.

¹¹⁹ Bertonha, "Brazil: an emerging military power?" 113.

¹²⁰ Bertonha, "Brazil: an emerging military power?" 114.

¹²¹ Bertonha, "Brazil: an emerging military power?" 119.

Bertonha does make an interesting point, though, which is that maybe the peaceful trajectory of Brazil is not so much a reflection of their intentions or their spirit for dialogue, but of their capabilities. Here it is definitely worth remembering one of offensive realism assumptions, namely that states can never be certain about other states' intentions.

Furthermore, as Mearsheimer points out, intentions may be peaceful today, but we cannot foresee what intentions will be in the future. "It is simply impossible, for example, to know what Germany or Japan's intentions will be toward their neighbors in 2025".¹²² Moreover, "it is impossible to identify who will be running the foreign policy of any country 5 or 10 years from now." Finally, "leaders come and go and some are more hawkish than others."¹²³ I see no reason why this should be less valid for Brazil than it is for Germany, Japan, or even China. Conceding that Brazil is today a democracy with peaceful intentions, there is no way to know who will run Brazil in 2025. For this reason I mistrust democratic peace theory as an assurance for security policy, and this regardless even of the problematic task of characterizing the meaning of "democracy," especially in South America. For instance, is Maduro's Venezuela a democracy?

Another point is related to the meaning of hegemony. A hegemon is a state that is so powerful that it dominates all the other states in the system. But how is this hegemony manifested? In the worst case (from the point of view of the other states in the system) it is manifested through offense and conquest. Mearsheimer rejects the defensive realist claim that offense rarely succeeds. By means of example, he mentions Bismarck's unification of Germany and the creation of the United States as we know it today.¹²⁴

However, this does not mean that hegemony equals a constant thrust towards expansion. For instance, Mearsheimer argues that China will seek to maximize the power gap between itself and neighbors like India, Japan and Russia, but it is unlikely to pursue military superiority so that it can go on the warpath and conquer other countries in the region, *although that is always a possibility*." Mearsheimer is thinking of Imperial Japan between 1931 and 1942. Instead, China will want to be in a position where it can dictate rules of behavior to its neighbors.¹²⁵

¹²² John J. Mearsheimer, "China's Unpeaceful Rise," *Current History*, Apr. 2006: 160.

¹²³ John J. Mearsheimer, "The Gathering Storm," 383-384.

¹²⁴ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 39-40.

¹²⁵ Mearsheimer, "The Gathering Storm," 389. Cursives are mine. See also John J. Mearsheimer, "Rivalry in the Offing," *China Security* 4, no. 2, spring 2008: 9-10.

Likewise, a hegemonic Brazil will probably not want to send armies to reconquer Uruguayan territory, or Paraguay, or even the north-eastern provinces of Argentina (Misiones and Corrientes), although this should not be completely off the table. Fears of the disappearance of the buffer states were real once in the past, ironically, the other way around. I have already mentioned the Platine War (1851-1852). Back then, Brazil was concerned about Argentinean leader Juan Manuel de Rosas and its plans to reconquer Uruguay, Paraguay and Bolivia in order to reestablish the territory of the former Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata, and furthermore, to invade Brazil and secede Rio Grande do Sul from the rest of the country.¹²⁶

Brazil will probably like to avoid episodes like Bolivian expropriation of Petrobras interests in 2006, or the Colombian agreement over US military basing rights in 2010. Following the China analogy, just as a rising China is likely to try to push the United States out of Asia, Brazil is likely to try to push the United States out of South America. Hitherto, the means of dealing with crisis such as these were strictly diplomatic. However, once again, this is maybe more a matter of capabilities than of intentions.

Military power does not necessarily need to be exercised, but it needs to be a credible threat. Brazilian military power is not a credible threat yet, hence Bolivia expropriates Petrobras and Colombia allows US military bases, Argentina free rides on Mercosur, and so on. Short of regional hegemony backed by substantial military power, the other South American states will be able to challenge rules of behavior dictated by Brazil.

To qualify as a potential hegemon, a state must have –by some reasonably large margin– the most formidable army as well as the most latent power among all the states located in its region.¹²⁷ Brazil represents already 55% of South American GDP; 50% of its population, 30% of its military personnel and 50% of its military expenditure; 70% of steel production and 48.75% of primary energy consumption. Moreover, no other state in the region comes even close to Brazil in any of those indicators. Argentina is the second ranked in average, but still far away in absolute terms.

¹²⁶ Francisco Doratioto, *Maldita guerra: Nova história da Guerra do Paraguai* (Sao Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2002) 28; Joaci Pereira Furtado, *A Guerra do Paraguai (1864-1870)* (Sao Paulo: Saraiva, 2000) 6.

¹²⁷ See page 24.

If the premises of offensive realism are reliable guidelines to forecast a future scenario, it is a matter of time before Brazil puts all its vast resources in line and starts asserting its power over the other states in the region. Of course it would have to proceed carefully and maybe even wait for the proper window of opportunity, as I will argue in the next chapter, but the capabilities will be there. However, one of the problems with this approach is that it takes for granted that Brazil's ability to dispose of its capabilities will be optimal.

3.5 Limitations of the approach

Offensive realism suggests there is no such a thing as an innocent rise in capabilities. The more capabilities a state has, and the greater the gap between that state and its neighbors in the system, the more it will be driven to assert its power when provided the opportunity to do so. There is a fundamental intrinsic assumption here, which is that states can make optimal use of its capabilities. Addressing the implications of this assumption is fundamental in order to understand the limitations of an offensive realist approach.

I will comment on three elements which may hinder an optimal use of state's capabilities. The first one is the quality of military equipment. The second one is the modern system of force employment, and directly related to it, the quality of education. This is important because it will reflect on the skills of the soldiers who will make use of that military equipment. The third one is military organizational practices.

Firstly, Bertonha observes that in 2007-2008, the quality of Brazilian military equipment seemed to be at its lowest level. Even though the Brazilian army counts with circa 300,000 soldiers, there is a dramatic lack of modern equipment, maintenance and training. The second-hand German and American tanks and armored fighting vehicles are from the 1970s, and only 30% are operational. Its anti-aircraft artillery had to be aimed and fired manually and its artillery was obsolete. A similar diagnosis was to be made of the Air Force and the Navy. Moreover, whatever purchase was made was based on opportunity instead of on real needs. The mobilization system is defective. The industrial-military complex is very limited. There is a dependence on foreign equipment and technology.¹²⁸ The situation has improved a little bit since then, as military budget

¹²⁸ Bertonha, "Brazil: an emerging military power?" 116, 118.

increased considerably. As regards the structure of the defense expenditure, in 2012, for example, 18.67% was destined to investments, twice the percentage of 2008.¹²⁹ All in all, it will take time to compensate many decades of lacking investment.

A large army combined with quantity and quality of equipment are certainly welcomed conditions for any state. However, according to Stephen Biddle, the key variables to predict outcome in modern combat are not technology or sheer number of troops but the effective use of modern system of force employment. Biddle defines this so-called modern system as a complex of cover, concealment, dispersion suppression, small-unit independence maneuver, and combined arms integration at the tactical level, and depth, reserves, and differential concentration at the operational level of war. It is then the implementation of this modern system what explains combat outcomes, and not mere technological superiority. Those countries that master the art of modern system are most likely to prevail in battle.¹³⁰

Biddle does not say that technology does not help at all, rather that technology is not the only variable to have in mind. It acts as an intervening variable that multiplies the effect of the key variable which is the application of the modern system.¹³¹ The greater the technological advantage the employer of the modern system has, the more lopsided will be its success. Technological advantages matter when they occur together with asymmetries in force employment.¹³² In this context, the level of education of a state is essential in order to achieve an efficient application of the modern system of force employment.

In the case of Brazil, the level of education ranks somewhere between disastrous to very bad. Access is not an issue, for practically all children between ages of seven and ten are in school. However, many students in primary and secondary education are lagging behind. Half the students in secondary education attend evening classes, many of them work and are older than they should, and the contents of their courses tend to be irrelevant. The student's ability to learn is limited by a tradition of bad quality instruction.¹³³

¹²⁹ Centro de Estudios Nueva Mayoría, *Balance Militar de América del Sur 2013* (Nueva Mayoría Editorial, 2013).

¹³⁰ Stephen Biddle, *Military power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) 3, 35, 44-48.

¹³¹ Biddle, *Military power*, 462-463.

¹³² Michael Horowitz and Stephen Rosen, "Evolution or revolution?" *Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 3, 2005, 439.

¹³³ Simon Schwartzman, "The Challenges of Education in Brazil," *Seminar on Education in Brazil* 3, 28, Apr. 2016, http://www.schwartzman.org.br/simon/oxford/1_simon.pdf.

As a result, two-thirds of 15-year-olds are capable of no more than basic arithmetic. Half cannot draw inferences from what they read, or give any scientific explanation for familiar phenomena. Even private, fee-paying schools are mediocre. Bad teachers are the biggest handicap. By global standards Latin American teachers are themselves very poorly educated. But in Brazil, they are not trained in subject matter nor teaching skills. They are ill-prepared and unmotivated.¹³⁴

Perhaps for these reasons, Bertonha objects a move to reverse the trend of professionalization in the Armed Forces in favor of compulsory service, even though the draft would provide soldiers at a low cost.¹³⁵

Finally, there is the issue of military organizational practices. Caitlin Talmadge argues that regimes facing significant coup threats are unlikely to adopt military organization practices that maximize military capability, because many of the same skills that heighten a military's prowess in conventional wars also have the potential to make it more threatening to political leaders at home. This is reflected in four activities. First, promotion patterns, which generate the military's human capital, deliberately select against officers with proven combat prowess. Second, realistic training provides opportunities for improving military skills that could be used against the regime, therefore it is restricted. Third, command authority is concentrated at the top, with virtually no authority devolved to the field, even regarding tactical matters. Lastly, there is restriction of horizontal communication within the military and distortion of vertical communication.¹³⁶ There is the possibility that Brazil, in light of its past of military coups, has incurred in some of these ill-fated practices. Argentina has certainly gone down this path.

Therefore, a complete assessment of Brazil's military capabilities would have to take into account these three elements: technology or equipment, skills and education, and organizational practices. They could give an idea of the minimum and maximum limits within which a state can display its material power capabilities.

¹³⁴ "No longer bottom of the class," *The Economist*, 9 Dec. 2010.

¹³⁵ Bertonha, "Brazil: an emerging military power?" 119.

¹³⁶ Caitlin Talmadge, "Different Threats, Different Militaries: Explaining Organizational Practices in Authoritarian Armies," *Security Studies*, 25 no. 1, 2016: 111-141.

4. The United States as an offshore balancer

This chapter addresses the first research question of the thesis: *should Argentina rely on extra regional balancing conducted by the United States?* The chapter is divided as follows: In the first section I present the offensive realist theory of offshore balancing as stated in Mearsheimer's book *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. The next sections look at the fine print of this theorizing in order to argue why Argentina should not simply wait in confidence for U.S. assistance: Brazil might take advantage of a window of opportunity and even if help comes, it will only come as a last resource. Moreover, offshore balancing might have unexpected consequences.

4.1 Offshore balancing in theory

According to Mearsheimer, it is virtually impossible for any state to achieve global hegemony. The principal impediment to world domination is the difficulty of projecting power across the world's oceans onto the territory of a rival great power. Consequently, the best outcome a great power can hope for is to be a regional hegemon and possibly control another region that is nearby and accessible over land. Moreover, the ideal situation for any great power is to be the only regional hegemon in the world. In other words, states that achieve regional hegemony seek to prevent great powers in other regions from duplicating their feat.¹³⁷

Aspiring hegemons in other regions must be checked not because they could strike across the ocean and launch an amphibious assault. After all, the separating power of waters works in both directions. However, a rival great power that dominates its own region will be an especially powerful foe that is essentially free to cause trouble in the other great power's backyard by helping to upset the balance of power there. Specifically, a regional hegemon might someday face a local challenge from an upstart state, which would surely have strong incentives to ally with the distant hegemon to protect itself from attack. The distant hegemon could project its power by transporting troops and supplies across the water to the friendly territory of its ally into the rival hegemon's backyard. This would not be an amphibious attack across the sea, but merely ferrying troops. In this case, providing the ability to move freely across the ocean, the water's stopping power would

¹³⁷ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 41.

have little effect.¹³⁸ This would have been the case, for example, if the French intervention in Mexico (1861-1867) had not come to an end.

How regional hegemons prevent other great powers from dominating far-off regions depends on the balance of power in those areas. If power is distributed rather evenly among the major states, so there is no potential hegemon among them, the distant hegemon can safely stay out of any conflict in those regions, because no state is powerful enough to conquer all of the others. Regional hegemons prefer that there be at least two great powers located together in other region, so their proximity forces them to concentrate their attention on each other rather than on the distant hegemon. The distant regional hegemon would prefer not to intervene each time a potential hegemon emerges in another region. The distant hegemon's first preference would rather be to leave the containment of the potential hegemon to the local great powers and watch from the sidelines. This is simple logic of buck-passing. States prefer to buck-pass than to balance when faced with a dangerous opponent. Only if the local great powers were unable to do the job, then the distant hegemon would take the appropriate measures to deal with the threatening state, i.e. move in and balance against it. The distant hegemon would also look for opportunities to undermine the threat and reestablish a rough balance of power in the region, so that it could return home. When this happens, the distant regional hegemon becomes a so-called *off-shore balancer*. However, regional hegemons would prefer to be the balancer of last resort.¹³⁹

The United Kingdom and the United States are generally regarded as the best examples of off-shore balancers. The United Kingdom was substantially more powerful than any other European state during most of the nineteenth century. However, it did not attempt to translate its abundant wealth into actual military might and attempt to dominate Europe. The reason it did not do so is the stopping power of water. Still, according to Mearsheimer, the United Kingdom has consistently acted as an offshore balancer in Europe, as offensive realism would predict.¹⁴⁰

Similarly, Mearsheimer explains that the United States achieved regional hegemony in the Americas, the only state in modern times to do so. By 1850 it had already acquired a huge land mass over which its rule needed to be consolidated. The United States did not attempt to conquer

¹³⁸ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 42, 142.

¹³⁹ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 42, 141.

¹⁴⁰ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 234-238.

territory in either Europe or Northeast Asia during the twentieth century because of the difficulty of projecting military forces across the oceans. Not even the United States, then, have the military capability to become a global hegemon. However, American military forces were sent to Europe and Northeast Asia on several occasions during the twentieth century according to the dictates of offensive realism. Whenever a potential peer competitor emerged in Europe or Northeast Asia, the United States sought to undermine it and remain thus the sole regional hegemon in the world. Even though at first the United States preferred to pass the buck to other great powers, eventually it had to use its own military forces in order to restore a balance of power.¹⁴¹

In this context, one might reasonably think that the United States would ultimately check on any Brazilian attempt for regional hegemony in South America. In the next section I will argue why the rest of South American states, particularly Argentina, would be unwise to just rest assured and wait confident that in case of a Brazilian aggression, the U.S. help will invariably come at the end to save the day.

4.2 Windows of opportunity

In the previous section, I have mentioned the French intervention in Mexico (1861-1867). On that occasion, the Second French Empire under Napoleon III of France invaded Mexico and established a client state called the Second Mexican Empire (1863-1867). The United States found themselves in the middle of the American Civil War (1861-1865). Therefore, the enforcement of Monroe Doctrine had to wait until 1867, but eventually the French withdrew.

Whether this was caused by the guerrilla resistance led by Benito Juarez, by U.S. pressure upon France, or a combination of both, is not so relevant in regard to the two points I want to make, which are the following: firstly, the United States were unable to prevent French invasion at its initial stages. Secondly, seven years passed between the invasion and the final departure of French troops. I will come back to the second point in the next section.

As was the case back then, the United States might find themselves in no position to react swiftly to a Brazilian military action, if they would be distracted, for instance, acting as offshore balancers *somewhere else*. After all, offensive realism is usually invoked to refer to an eventual

¹⁴¹ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 234-238.

future confrontation in East Asia between the People's Republic of China and the United States. Mearsheimer himself is focused primarily in this scenario.

The argument is well known, and in a sense, this thesis is founded on the very same logic. In Mearsheimer's words, "if China continues its impressive economic growth over the next few decades, the United States and China are likely to engage in an intense security competition with considerable potential for war." This is because "an increasingly powerful China is also likely to try to push the United States out of Asia" and try to come up with its own Chinese version of the Monroe Doctrine.¹⁴² Offensive realism expects China to attempt regional hegemony in East Asia and the United States to react as an offshore balancer.

United States commitment to the events in East Asia would provide Brazil with the opportunity to make its offensive move, for example, invading the northeastern provinces of Argentina, if they would ever conceive such intentions. Of course the White House and the UN Security Council would condemn the episode, and might even impose sanctions on Brazil and send weapons or economic aid the resistance, providing there is any resistance at all.

But apart from that, would the United States be committed to fight two offshore balancing wars at the same time, or would they prioritize East Asia over South America? After all, South America has been historically a region of little relevance for the United States (and geopolitical thought in general, for that matter).

Let us assume that Poggio Teixeira is wrong and the scope of Monroe Doctrine extends beyond the Caribbean and reaches South America. Even so, Monroe Doctrine is about forbidding colonial intervention by *extra* regional powers. Back then, European powers. Nowadays it could probably include China.

There is no hint, however, that Monroe Doctrine cares about *internal* distribution of power in South America. There was no need for that in nineteenth century, logically, because South American states were underdeveloped and were not regarded as powers at all. But based upon historical record, nothing indicates that United States feels uncomfortable with Brazil running the continent. *Quite on the contrary*: "The United States has been prepared to allow, indeed has at

¹⁴² Mearsheimer, "China's Unpeaceful Rise;" Mearsheimer, "The Gathering Storm."

times encouraged, Brazil to assume the leading role in South America.”¹⁴³ Brazil, on his part, viewed the United States as most sympathetic to its own aspirations.¹⁴⁴

So even if other South American states are persuaded that United States will eventually intervene, perhaps Brazil is not so persuaded. This uncertainty, whether a miscalculation or not, could make Brazil more prone to take risks.

4.3 Implications of offshore balancing for third states involved

In the first section, I have explained that regional hegemons would prefer not to intervene each time a potential hegemon emerges in another region. They prefer to buck-pass and let local great powers to face the threatening state. Offshore-balancer would intervene only as a last resort. This is historically accurate. But apart from that, the consequences of the war for third states involved are unpredictable and not always pleasant. Mearsheimer does not mention it because its theory is concerned about great powers only. Let us see some examples.

The Seventh Coalition eventually defeated Napoleon in Waterloo, but the Republic of Venice, independent until 1797, ceased to exist as such and was never to return again. Prospects for a resurrected independent Poland would have to wait one more century after most of the Duchy of Warsaw was given to Imperial Russia.

The United States entered World War I only in April 1917, and World War II in December 1941. By that time, both conflicts were already in their third year. The war was eventually won by United States and its allies. Meanwhile, however, those countries which were theaters of operations suffered a significant amount of destruction and casualties.

In the case of World War II, France, Belgium and the Netherlands remained occupied until 1944. Great Britain was not occupied but endured sustained bombardment during the Battle of Britain. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe also suffered occupation as well. The aftermath of the war left Great Britain and France extenuated, and they would eventually lose their status of first-order powers in favor of United States and the Soviet Union. Central and Eastern

¹⁴³ Leslie Bethell, “Brazil as a Regional Power in Latin America or South America?” *SAIIA Policy Briefing* 13, Jan. 2010: 4.

¹⁴⁴ Trinkunas, “Brazil’s rise,” 8.

Europe, and the Baltic States, would remained tied into the Soviet-led Communist bloc until 1989. Similarly, in Asia, Imperial Japan was defeated, but in the meantime China and other countries took the burden of the war in their own homelands, and once it was over, the Communists took control of mainland China, Korea was divided and remains divided as of today, and so on.

The point I am trying to make is the following: offensive realism is a theory about first-order powers and their interactions, or put differently, about aggregate results in the international system. However, this thesis is about the implications of Brazilian hegemony for Argentina; in other words, it is concerned about the specific implications of offensive realism for states which are not first-order powers.

Offensive realism expects offshore balancing. But even if it eventually occurs, this is little comfort for states who in the meantime have to endure a painful occupation, as it was the case of China, Poland or Czechoslovakia in World War II, or as it would be the case of Argentina (or any other South American state) should Brazil be willing to employ its offensive capabilities.

Therefore, South American states, and Argentina in particular, should not stand idle on the perspective of Brazilian rise to hegemony just because offensive realism expects the United States to intervene. First of all, if the United States were facing more pressing concerns, for example in East Asia regarding China, Brazil could seize this opportunity to make its move, and the United States might not intervene at all, or wait years before intervention.

It hardly matters whether this is a miscalculation on part of Brazil. If United States does eventually intervene, it only means that the war has already started, maybe occupation has taken place, and the local players were not able to deter it. Even in light of a future eventual victory, this matters little for those states in which theaters of operation are located. Finally, in the aftermath of the conflict, the local players might yet discover an unpredictable price for a victory that was not achieved by their own means.

It would be much better to avoid the breakout of a war from the beginning. One option for that is to send a signal to the threatening state that a balancing coalition is ready to check its ambitions. This is quite often a difficult task, though, and as I shall argue in the next chapter, very unlikely in the case of South America.

5. Geopolitics of South America and external balancing

This chapter is divided in three sections. In the first one, I introduce geographical variables. In terms of scenario methodology, these are the contextual conditions. The next section describes the geography of South America and its historical implications for the patterns of cooperation and conflict. My purpose is to illustrate why geography matters when it comes to understanding South America. The final section analyzes the possibility of external balancing against Brazil.

5.1 The return of geopolitics

In chapter 1, I mentioned two geographical elements that must be considered when it comes to balancing. The first one is relative position or distance. States nearer the threat are more likely to engage in balancing than are more distant states. Since the ability to project power declines with distance, states that are nearby pose a greater threat than those that are far away. The second one is related to the first. It is the presence of a buffer zone, which could be the territory of another state or a geographical barrier such as a large body of water.

In the original Waltzian structural realism, the international distribution of power alone was sufficient to explain the patterns of cooperation (alliances) and conflict (wars). According to Grygiel, Waltz's *Theory of International Politics* represents the apogee of a social scientific tendency toward mono-causal explanations based on variables such as anarchy or state power, where international relations are an exclusively social or human realm whose origins and moving factors are to be found in the actors or in the system that they willingly (or unwillingly) create. Geography had been abandoned due to a drive to make theories more elegant and simple, but also due to the misuse of geography by ideologically motivated authors, such as Haushofer.¹⁴⁵

Mearsheimer's inclusion of relative distance and buffer zones is not unprecedented, though, and it was probably inspired by the reintroduction of these variables into the discussion of international relations by some defensive realists.

¹⁴⁵ Jakub J. Grygiel, *Great Powers and Geopolitical Change* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006) 1-20.

Firstly, Stephen Walt argued that distance affects the perception of threat, as mentioned in chapter 1.¹⁴⁶ However, Grygiel observes, distance alone does not explain much. Great Britain and France differed in their perception of threat from German power, even though they are roughly equidistant from Germany. Naturally, the difference is explained by the existence of the Channel between Great Britain and the continent, and the lack of powerful natural barriers between France and Germany.¹⁴⁷

Secondly, Robert Jervis observed that geography affects the security dilemma by influencing the offense-defense balance. Few physical factors favor the attacker but many favor the defender, because the defender usually has the advantage of cover. In this way, anything that increase the amount of ground the attacker has to cross, or impedes his progress across it, or makes him more vulnerable while crossing, increases the advantage accruing to the defense. When states are separated by natural defensive barriers, such as oceans, large rivers, and high mountains, conquest is more difficult. The defender can prevail against superior numbers, only by staying on its side of the barrier.¹⁴⁸

It is often argued that the development of long-range bombers, nuclear weapons, and ballistic missiles, has changed radically the nature of warfare, and thus the geographical barriers have lost all its military importance. However, this is misleading. It might be true when it comes to direct conflict between nuclear powers, but these are only a small elite. The vast majority of states in the world, and especially the South American states which are the actors of this thesis, do not possess nuclear weapons and therefore their military operations remain conventional.

As C. Dale Walton observes, “while geography might have had little meaningful impact on a US-Soviet central nuclear war, it certainly is not irrelevant to most conventional engagements.” Despite the technological advances that have allowed overcoming most of the natural barriers, conventional military operations remain subject to the real possibilities that offer the operation theaters, and will remain so in the foreseeable future.¹⁴⁹ Robert D. Kaplan puts it this way: “anyone

¹⁴⁶ Stephen Walt, *Formation of Alliances*.

¹⁴⁷ Grygiel, *Great Powers and Geopolitical Change*, 17.

¹⁴⁸ Robert Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics* 30, no. 2, Jan. 1978: 167-214.

¹⁴⁹ C. Dale Walton, *Geopolitics and the Great Powers in the Twenty-first Century* (London: Routledge, 2007) 20-21; See Víctor M. Mijares, “Unveiling the Offense-Defense Balance in South America,” *ISA 56th Annual Convention*, Feb. 19, 2015: 6-7; Grygiel, *Great Powers and Political Change*, 15: “Geography has been forgotten, not conquered.”

who truly believes that geography has been pivotally downgraded is profoundly ignorant of military logistics (...) Terrain determines the pace and method of fighting.”¹⁵⁰

Even the involvement of a first-order power like United States in Iraq and Afghanistan required a conventional military operation. If this is true for United States, which possesses state-of-the-art technology and the highest military budget in the world, then it most also be true for South American states in which the military technology is particularly outdated and military budgets are relatively lower when compared to other regions.

Hence, offensive realism has place for geographic variables. The most evident implication is that oceans diminish the capacity to project power and therefore great powers must satisfy themselves with regional hegemony. This was discussed already in previous chapters. It is also necessary to pay attention to the implication of geographic features other than oceans.

5.2 The geography of South America

The shape of South America is roughly triangular, being broad in the north and tapering to a point in the south.¹⁵¹ The western edge of the continent is rimmed by the Andes, one of the world’s longest and highest mountain ranges, extending from Tierra del Fuego to northeastern Venezuela. There are hundreds of peaks more than 4,500 meters tall, many of which are volcanic. Mt. Aconcagua (6,962 m.), located in Argentina, is the tallest mountain outside the Himalayan range. Ojos del Salado (6960 m.), in the Argentinean-Chilean border, is the tallest volcano in the world. The Andes also feature high plateaus such as the *altiplano* of Peru and Bolivia, which has an elevation of 3,700 meters. Potosi, a city located in Bolivian altiplano, was for centuries the location of the Spanish colonial mint, its population exceeding 200,000 people already in the seventeenth century. At 4,090 meters, it is one of the highest cities in the world. The northern and central Andes also contain three of the world’s highest capitals: Bogotá, Quito, and La Paz (the highest of all).¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Robert D. Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography*, 34.

¹⁵¹ Héctor Fernando Ávila, “South America,” *Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, 2016, 26 Apr. 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/place/South-America>.

¹⁵² “South America: Physical Geography,” *National Geographic*, 2016, 26 Apr. 2016. <http://education.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/south-america-physical-geography>.

Except between Argentina and Chile, the crests of the Andes do not serve as national boundaries. In the south, the Andes form a sufficiently high, narrow and unpopulated single range that functions as boundary. In the north, three distinct ranges are separated by high valleys, and in the center, there are two ranges and one high valley, both forming a wide habitable zone. The borders are located to the east already in Amazonian territory.¹⁵³

South America has two principal highland areas: the Brazilian Highlands and the Guiana Highlands, stretching along the continent's eastern and northern sides, respectively. The Brazilian Highlands are lower than the Andes (1000 m. average) and cover most of south and center parts of Brazilian coast.¹⁵⁴ The Guiana Highlands are also a low-mountain region that covers the southern half of Venezuela, all of the Guianas except for the low Atlantic coastal plain, the northern part of Brazil, and a portion of southeastern Colombia. There is abundance of rainfall, and no dry season. The vegetation is mostly tropical rainforest.¹⁵⁵

The major drainage divide in South America is along the crest of the Andes, so rain that falls only 160 km. east of the Pacific may flow to the Atlantic Ocean.¹⁵⁶ There are three major basins, ordered from north to south: Orinoco, Amazonas, and La Plata.

The Orinoco basin is bordered by the Andes to the west and north, the Guiana Highlands to the east, and the Amazon basin to the south, and encompasses approximately four fifths of Venezuela and one fourth of Colombia. Orinoco River flows 2,740 km from its source in the Guiana Highlands to its mouth in the Atlantic Ocean, most of the trajectory throughout Venezuelan territory, except for a section that forms part of the frontier between Venezuela and Colombia.¹⁵⁷

The second major physiographic feature of South America (after the Andes) is the Amazon Basin, which dominates the central north portion of the continent, and is bounded by the Andes to the west, the Guiana highlands to the north, and the Brazilian highlands in the southeast. In this context, the Amazon basin is the largest river basin in the world. The Amazon rainforest, also called the Amazon Jungle, covers most of the Amazon basin. The area of the rainforest is 5,500,000

¹⁵³ Cohen, *Geopolitics of the World System*, 363.

¹⁵⁴ "South America: Physical Geography," *National Geographic*.

¹⁵⁵ "Guiana Highlands," *Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, 2016, 26 Apr. 2016, <<http://www.britannica.com/place/Guiana-Highlands>>.

¹⁵⁶ "South America," *Encyclopædia Britannica*

¹⁵⁷ William M. Denevan, "Orinoco River," *Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, 2016, 26 Apr. 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/place/Orinoco-River>.

km². The largest portion of the Amazon territory belongs to Brazil, and the rest is shared among Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela.¹⁵⁸ It is worth insisting that the borders between Brazil and its neighbors to the west are not the crest of the Andes, but the borders are located in the rainforest. Thus, for example, the Andes are located roughly in the center of Peru, and all the eastern edge of the country is rainforest.

The La Plata basin is the second most important drainage system, and is located in south-central South America. Its most important rivers are the Paraguay, Paraná and Uruguay. The Paraguay River originates in Brazil, crosses Paraguay and later forms the border with Argentina to the west, until it empties into the Parana River near the Argentinean city of Corrientes. The Parana River also forms the frontier between Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina (the Triple Frontier). After the confluence of Paraguay, it flows south throughout Argentinean territory into the estuary of Río de la Plata. The Uruguay River, which is the eastern border of Argentina, separating it from Brazil and Uruguay, flows into the Parana Delta a few kilometers north of the estuary. Montevideo, the capital of Uruguay, is located on the northern shore of the estuary, and Buenos Aires, on the southwestern shore.¹⁵⁹

When it comes to human geography, the South American continent shows a vacuum in its hinterland. Population remains concentrated along the continent's periphery, and most of the interior is sparsely peopled. In the west, the national ecumenes of Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Chile are all confined to mountain basins hundreds of miles from each other. This means that population centers –the capital cities and business nodes- are mostly in the highlands. In the east, the population is located in Atlantic coastal regions. The vast majority of Brazilian population lives in the Brazilian highlands or on the narrow coastal region adjacent to it. In Argentina, population is concentrated in the La Plata basin. The weight of the continent's population and resources is in this eastern side: Brazil, Argentina, and also Uruguay and Paraguay. Finally, in contrast to the populated western and eastern edges of the continent, the interior of South America is a hollow core due to rain forest, dry grassland, and Patagonian desert.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ James J. Parsons, "Amazon River," *Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, 2016, 26 Apr. 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/place/Amazon-River>.

¹⁵⁹ Waldir Freitas Oliveira, "Rio de la Plata," *Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, 2016, 26 Apr. 2016 <http://www.britannica.com/place/Rio-de-la-Plata>.

¹⁶⁰ Cohen, *Geopolitics of the World System*, 363-365; H. J. de Blij and Peter O. Muller, *Geography. Realms, Regions and Concepts* (14th Ed.) (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2010) 234, 242.

What has been the geopolitical significance of these physical and human geographic characteristics?

In chapter 3, I have already made reference to the issue of interstate wars in South America. The Wars of Independence against Spanish rule that took place in the first quarter of the nineteenth century concluded in 1824 with the Battle of Ayacucho in Peru. After that, there were clashes proper of state formation period, in which boundaries are settled; the most important was the aforementioned War of the Pacific.

However, most of violence in South America was intra-state, in the form of civil wars. In twentieth century, interstate wars have been even more limited and sporadic. If one compares a contemporary map of South America with one of the nineteenth century, there are no major differences in borders. Certainly, not one political state has ceased to exist in South America as consequence of war.¹⁶¹ This “under-conflictual anomaly,” as Buzan and Wæver called it,¹⁶² has not passed unnoticed to IR scholars.

Different theories have been proposed to explain the relative absence of war in South America (or Latin America, generally speaking). Echoing Tilly’s theory of state making through war making, it has been proposed that limited wars made limited states, and limited states made limited war.¹⁶³

The theory of hegemonic peace –directly linked to the hegemonic stability theory- has been challenged, demonstrating the tenuous relationship between the South American conflicts since the end of the First World War and the diplomatic, economic, and military actions of United States in the region. The militarized interstate disputes were not successfully managed by the United States, even to the point of having increased in the period of U.S. hegemony.¹⁶⁴

There were non-realist approaches, too. One is democratic peace theory, which in late developments established that foreign policy of democracies tends to be more peaceful than

¹⁶¹ Miguel Ángel Centeno, *Blood and debt: War and the Nation-State in Latin America* (University Park; Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), cited in Escudé, “Un experimento pacifista...,” 9.

¹⁶² Buzan and Wæver, *Regions and Powers*, 307.

¹⁶³ Centeno, cited in Brian D. Taylor and Roxana Botea, “Tilly Tally: War-Making and State-Making in the Contemporary Third World,” *International Studies Review* 10, 2008, 27-56.

¹⁶⁴ David Mares, *Violent Peace. Militarized Interstate Bargaining in Latin America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001) cited in Mijares, “Unveiling the Offense-Defense Balance in South America,” 4.

autocracies. However, characterizing South American states as liberal democracies proper of democratic peace theory can be problematic at best, particularly in twentieth century, when there was no shortage of military coups and de facto regimes. Escudé points at “something in the ethical and political culture of Latin American concert,” but his argument remains underdeveloped.¹⁶⁵

Mijares breaks with all these approaches and, in the spirit of Grygiel, suggest to pay attention again to geography. Human geography shows the location of the centers of main strategic importance of a state and whether there is demographic contiguity through neighboring states. In South America, the centers of decision-making, the main military bases, and the core of industrial production –targets of greater strategic value- tend to be located on the shores of the continent. Mijares observes that the geographical contiguity of some of these objectives leads not to a regional security complex but to the “compartmentalization of sub-clusters of security in the form of dyads.” Moreover, regarding offense-defense balance in the terms of Jervis, Mijares concludes that “*there is an advantage for the defense in at least six of the nine neighbors of Brazil.*”¹⁶⁶

Simply, distances are too big and obstacles too great. Some examples: the distance between Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro is 1965.6 km, roughly less than the distance between London and Sofia (2014.49 km). The distance between Lima and Santiago is 2466.28 km, barely more than between London and Athens (2391.82 km). The distance between Lima and Rio de Janeiro is 3775.39 km, more or less like the distance between London and Yerevan (3614.08 km).

Distance and physiological barriers reinforced separation and isolation, and this prevented cooperation as much as it prevented major wars. After Independence War, nine countries emerged from the three former Spanish vicerealties. Despite common language, cultural heritage and shared national problems, the norm between former Spanish colonies was fragmentation and not integration, much less with Brazil included in the picture. Thus, until very recently South American states were not able to increase cooperation.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Escudé, “Un experimento pacifista...,” 10.

¹⁶⁶ Mijares, “Unveiling the Offense-Defense Balance in South America,” 7, 13. *Cursives are mine.*

¹⁶⁷ De Blij and Muller, *Geography*, 239-240.

5.3 External balancing

In this section I will give answer to one of the research questions of this thesis: *what are the chances of external balancing in South America, i.e. a coalition of South American states?*

To sum up what has been discussed hitherto, when it comes to assessing incentives for joining in a balancing coalition, there are three variables to consider.

One of them is related to distribution of capabilities or relative power, in a strictly Waltzian sense. More powerful states are more likely to engage in balancing than are weaker states. Weak states facing a potential hegemon may be so vulnerable that they choose to bandwagon rather than balance. Bandwagoning is the strategy for the weak.

The other two are geographic variables. The first one is relative position or distance. States nearer the threat are more likely to engage in balancing than are more distant states. Potential hegemons that are nearby pose a greater threat than those that are far way, since the ability to project power declines with distance. The second one is very much related to the first one: the presence of a buffer zone, or a natural geographic barrier that gives the defense the advantage over the offense. This could be the territory of another state, a large body of water, high mountains, etc.

Let us see what happens when these three variables are considered in the case of South America against a hegemonic Brazil. Hegemony does not equal a constant thrust towards expansion or marching into other countries' capitals. It means that a state is so powerful that it dominates all the other states in the system, and for this it counts with a credible military force to substantiate its power. This prevents the other states from challenging rules of behavior imposed by the hegemon.

However, let us assume that the worst case scenario is presented: Brazil willing to make use of force and conduct an offensive operation, i.e. sending an army into another state's territory. If the analysis of these variables shows that external balancing is not likely even in the face of a worst case scenario, then logically it will be much less likely when the threat is less tangible.

Table 3 compares South American states by area, population, population below the poverty line, GDP and total primary energy consumption. I have tried to obtain the most recent year of estimate in each case.

	Area (km ²)	Population	% Poverty	GDP	TPEC
Argentina	2,780,400	43,024,376	30 (2014)	537.7	3,66507
Bolivia	1,098,581	10,631,486	45 (2014)	33	0,29253
Brazil	8,515,767	202,656,784	21 (2014)	2,417	12,09546
Chile	756,102	17,363,894	15 (2009)	258.1	1,41864
Colombia	1,141,748	46,245,296	33 (2012)	377.7	1,54529
Ecuador	276,841	15,654,411	26 (2013)	100.9	0,64015
Guyana	214,969	735,554	35 (2006)	3.097	0,02231
Paraguay	406,750	6,703,860	35 (2010)	30.88	0,46044
Peru	1,285,216	30,147,936	26 (2012)	202.6	1,09307
Suriname	163,820	573,311	70 (2002)	5.210	0,042
Uruguay	181,034	3,332,972	19 (2010)	57.47	0,16849
Venezuela	916,445	28,868,486	32 (2011)	381.3	3,3642
Total	17,737,673	405,938,566		4,404.957	24.80765

Table 3. South American countries by area, population, poverty, GDP, Total Primary Energy Consumption^{168 169}

I have chosen “population below the poverty line” as an indicator of wealth distribution within each state, so as not to rely merely on GDP. I might as well have chosen GDP per capita or GINI index and the results would not differ substantially.

Table 4 presents the military balance in South America as of 2013: military expenditures by absolute numbers and percentage of GDP; total personnel and land forces; number of heavy and light weight tanks, and fighter aircraft. Offensive realism emphasizes land power, therefore I have chosen to highlight army personnel and tanks. Aircraft is considered as a support to land power, so I have included fighter aircraft as means of example. Sea forces, however, have been excluded from this table.¹⁷⁰ Let us interpret the data coming from tables 3 and 4.

¹⁶⁸ Area, population and poverty rate from *The World Factbook 2013-14*; GDP from The World Bank, *Data by Country*, TPEC from U.S. Energy Information Administration, “International Energy Statistics.”, 16. Apr. 2016, <http://www.eia.gov/cfapps/ipdbproject/IEDIndex3.cfm?tid=44&pid=44&aid=1>.

¹⁶⁹ **Population:** year of estimate 2014; **GDP:** year of estimate 2014, billion dollars at market prices (current US\$); **TPEC:** year of estimate 2012, Quadrillion BTU

¹⁷⁰ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 56,134

	Budget	% GDP	Total Personnel	Army	Tanks (heavy + light)	Fighters
Argentina	4,766.703	0.95	75,700	44,000	230 + 166	96
Bolivia	456.291	1.54	46,300	35,000	0 + 54	34
Brazil	32,449.492	1.32	337,400	208,300	430 + 84	318
Chile	6,286.789	2.20	64,200	37,100	318 + 0	80
Colombia	8,843.216	2.28	268,500	229,200	0	90
Ecuador	2,057.656	2.36	60,800	49,000	0 + 108	47
Guyana	No data	No data	1,100	900	-	-
Paraguay	512.558	1.66	10,690	7,600	6 + 5	6
Peru	2,329.483	1.05	117,000	76,400	160 + 96	71
Suriname	No data	No data	1,840	1,400	-	-
Uruguay	957.301	1.85	24,600	15,900	15 + 39	13
Venezuela	7,473.391	2.16	97,900	66,000	92 + 112	80

Table 4. Military Balance in South America (2013)¹⁷¹

Argentina

Argentina benefits from rich natural resources, a highly literate population and a diversified industrial base. It has suffered recurring economic crises, persistent fiscal and current account deficits, high inflation, mounting external debt and capital flight.¹⁷² However, in terms of relative power or material capabilities, Argentina is second only to Brazil, although the gap between the two has grown immense in the last decades. As of 2013, Argentina's Gross Domestic Product at Purchasing Power Parity was US\$771 billion. Argentina has the third biggest population, although 30% of population are below poverty line. Argentina's active military personnel is 75,700 (44,000 land forces). However, Argentina stands fifth in the continent in defense budget (US\$ 4,766.703 million, one eighth of Brazil's budget), behind Colombia, Venezuela and Chile, and last in percentage of GDP spent in military expenditure.

¹⁷¹ Centro de Estudios Nueva Mayoría, *Balance Militar*.

¹⁷² *The World Factbook 2013-14*.

The second country in South America by area, one third the size of Brazil, Argentina is Brazil's biggest neighbor. They share a border of 1,263 km. The river Iguazú forms the boundary between Argentina's Misiones Province and the Brazilian state of Paraná, until it empties into the Paraná River at the point where the borders of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay meet (the Triple Frontier). The Paraná River separates then Argentina from Paraguay. To the east and south of Misiones, the Uruguay River forms the boundary with the Brazilian states of Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul, and continues flowing southward, separating Argentina's Corrientes Province and Rio Grande do Sul, and then Entre Ríos Province and Uruguay.

To be sure, a large scale river-crossing operation is not the optimal way to start an invasion, because the water obstacle prevents ground maneuver in the usual way, and it demands more detailed planning and technical support than normal tactical operations. However, it is still feasible if the plans include the fundamentals of surprise, extensive preparation, flexibility, traffic control, organization and speed.¹⁷³

Argentina has therefore the size, population and wealth necessary to enter a balancing coalition. Moreover, a coalition would be much convenient in view of the currently extremely low military expenditure. It has incentives to balance, because it is a direct neighbor of Brazil, with whom it shares a lengthy fluvial border that, even though it presents some obstacles for the offensive, does not constitute an impassable natural barrier for a reasonably competent enemy.

Paraguay, Uruguay, Guyana, Suriname

Paraguay and Uruguay have been traditionally considered by geopolitical discourse as buffer states between Argentina and Brazil. Their GDPs combined (US\$ 104 billion) are but one seventh of Argentina's. Their combined population amounts to 10 million inhabitants. Whereas Uruguay's population below poverty line is less than 19%, Paraguay's poverty rate is 35%. As of 2013, military personnel of Paraguay was 10,690 (7,600) and Uruguay 24,600 (15,900). Combined defense budget amounted to US\$ 1,500 million.

Paraguay and Uruguay rank eighth and eleventh among South American countries by area. Paraguay is less than one seventh the size of Argentina. Uruguay is even smaller. Their borders

¹⁷³ *River-Crossing Operations* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps, 1998).

with Brazil are 1,371 km and 1,050 km, respectively. In both cases, these borders do not present any major obstacle. In the case of Paraguay, there are the Paraguay and Paraná rivers, and some mountain ridges that at their highest point reach 700 meters. The eastern region of Paraguay (that is, east of Paraguay River) has spacious plains, broad valleys and lowlands, and about 80% of the region lies below 300 meters in elevation. The western region, called Gran Chaco, is a vast and flat, almost featureless, plain.

Uruguay's border with Brazil is composed, from west to east, of the river Cuareim, a low range of hills (no more than 500 m in height) called Cuchilla de Haedo, and then conventional lines until the Atlantic Ocean. Uruguayan landscape is largely a gently rolling land, with an average elevation of 117 m.

Despite being direct neighbors of Brazil and lacking natural borders to alter the balance in favor of the defense, offensive realism predicts that Paraguay and Uruguay would rather bandwagon with Brazil rather than join a coalition against it, for they are rather weak states with small capabilities.

The same reasoning can be applied to the two small states Guyana and Suriname, to the north of Brazil. Guyana is slightly bigger than Uruguay, but as regards GDP, population and military personnel, both Guyana and Suriname occupy the last positions of the continent and their numbers are frankly irrelevant when compared to the rest.

Chile and Ecuador

Chile is the seventh South American country by area, less than one fourth the size of Argentina, and as of 2013, it was sixth by GDP (US\$335 billion), and sixth in terms of population (17,363,894). Chile has the smallest rate of population below the poverty line (15%) and it is the only South American OECD member; moreover, it is a market-oriented economy with high level of foreign trade, reputed for strong financial institutions.¹⁷⁴

Active military personnel is 64,200 (37,100), similar to Ecuador (see below) and a bit less than Argentina. Rate of GDP spent in defense budget is 2.20%, one of the highest in the continent,

¹⁷⁴ *The World Factbook 2013-14.*

and spends more in absolute terms than its neighbors. As a matter of fact, Chile holds the highest expenditure in investment. It is generally considered that Chilean armed forces counts with the most modern military technology in the region, particularly regarding tanks and fighter aircraft. Despite the thin and long shape of the country, which translates into lack of strategic depth and several challenges for communications and logistics, Chilean armed forces are a credible deterrent. Their presence in any balancing coalition would be highly esteemed.¹⁷⁵

Ecuador, on the other hand, is the ninth country by area, roughly bigger than half the size of Paraguay and, as of 2013, had the seventh biggest GDP (US\$ 158 million). Its population almost equals the number of Chile (15,654,411) and so does its military personnel: 60,800 (49,000). Ecuador has doubled its rate of GDP, and augmented 2.4 times the budget destined for military expenditure.¹⁷⁶

Ecuador, while not being an entirely weak state, is among the less powerful in relation to the other South American states, and this is one of the reasons why offensive realism would expect it to pass the buck rather than joining a balancing coalition against Brazil. The other reason is relative position or distance. Ecuador is not a direct neighbor of Brazil. In between the two states lie the Loreto Region of Peru and the Amazonas Department of Colombia. Moreover, all that area is a scarcely populated buffer zone covered with the thick vegetation of Amazonas rainforest. Therefore, Ecuador is likely to feel less vulnerable to invasion and more inclined to pass the buck to an endangered state that has a common border with Brazil.

The same logic applies to Chile, which despite its size, is a relatively wealthy country with a credible military power that would prove a valuable ally in any coalition. However, it is unlikely that it would join to balance against Brazil. Not only it is not a direct neighbor, but the territories of four states (Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay and Peru) serve as a buffer zone between Chile and Brazil. Chile is not keen on alliances with anyone, but in any case, it will be more likely to side *with Brazil* against any of its direct neighbors, Peru, Bolivia, or Argentina, than the other way around. In fact, as mentioned in chapter 3, traditionally there was a checkboard pattern of crossed informal alliances: Argentina-Peru, Chile-Brazil, and Chile-Ecuador. The border disputes between

¹⁷⁵ Centro de Estudios Nueva Mayoría, *Balance Militar de América del Sur*.

¹⁷⁶ Centro de Estudios Nueva Mayoría, *Balance Militar de América del Sur*.

Argentina and Chile have been settled, but controversies with Bolivia and Peru remain. Chile has more reasons to be concerned about Bolivia and Peru than about Brazilian hegemony.

Peru, Colombia and Venezuela

Peru, Colombia, and Venezuela complete the South American top five when it comes to GDP and population. As of 2013, Colombia had a GDP of US\$ 527 billion and is more populated than Argentina. 33% of population is below poverty line. Military personnel of Colombia is 268,500 (229,200), due to the ongoing conflict with the FARC. The ratio between GDP and defense budget is 2.28%, the highest in South America, and the second in absolute terms (US\$ 8,843 million), yet it amounts only to one fourth of Brazil's.

Peru is the third South American country by area, roughly bigger than half the size of Argentina. In 2013 it had a GDP of US\$ 344 billion, and 26% of population were below poverty line. Military personnel is 117,000 (76,400), and military expenditure is more or less one third of Colombia's. The area of Venezuela is barely smaller than Bolivia's. Its GDP was US\$ 407 billion in 2013. Its population is almost equal to Peru, but percentage below poverty line is 32%. The military personnel is 97,900 (66,000). Military expenditures in Venezuela are almost as high as in Colombia.

The three countries share borders with Brazil and these are located in the Amazon jungle. Peruvian border is 2,659 km long, Venezuelan 2,137 km and Colombian 1,790 km. The Amazon jungle, or Amazonia, is sparsely populated, with scattered settlements inland. Most of the population lives in a few larger cities: Manaus in Brazil, and Iquitos in Peru, which is only accessible by airplane or boat. The principal path of transportation for local people and produce is the Amazon River itself. Infrastructure is also scarce. The Trans-Amazonian highway is underdeveloped and unpaved, and the Trans-Amazonian Railway is only a project.

The key argument I propose here is that Amazonia serves as an immense buffer zone between Peru, Colombia, and Venezuela, on one side, and Brazil on the other. The huge distance and the scarce transportation infrastructure, plus the difficulty inherent in moving throughout a thick jungle, alters the offense-defense balance in favor of defense. Therefore, Peru, Colombia and

Venezuela, even though they have the size and potential to join a coalition (perhaps a little less in the case of Peru), feel relatively less threatened by a Brazilian expansionist drive.

It is true that Brazil is interested in developing infrastructure and logistics in Amazonia. It is widely known that Brazil regards Amazonia as a strategic region and it has the imperative to protect it. Brazil might change the game here with initiatives such as IIRSA, but it will still take some time to make a significant progress.

Besides, even if Brazil develops its side of the Amazonia, Peru, Colombia and Venezuela still have a huge area of underdeveloped jungle region. Providing they have the incentives to build infrastructure there, it would still take considerable time, more than in the case of Brazil, for they have fewer resources. Moreover, in the case that Brazil was able to send an expeditionary force throughout Amazonia, it would still have to cross the Andes to penetrate into the strategic centers of Peru, Colombia, and Venezuela.

My reasoning is that as it stands, Amazonia is analogous either to the situation in Central Asia described by Mackinder before the era of transcontinental railways (i.e. a vast space of difficult access and mobility), or to the presence of a large body of water. In any case, projection of land power is fundamentally hindered in the current situation.

Bolivia

At first sight, the case of Bolivia lies halfway between those of Peru and Paraguay. Bolivia is a direct neighbor of Brazil, and in fact it has the longest border: 3,403 km. It is the fifth biggest South American state by area, slightly smaller than Colombia. However it is a rather poor country, even by South American standards. Bolivia had as of 2013 a GDP of US\$ 59 billion, slightly bigger than those of Uruguay and Paraguay, and 45% of population live below poverty line. Its military personnel is 46,300 (35,000) but its military expenditure is one of the lowest in the continent (US\$ 456 million), only above Guyana and Suriname. The departments of Pando and Beni in the north are the least populous and the most isolated, and most of its population lives in poverty.

Lack of resources and ineffective occupation of the territory make the case of Bolivia more similar to those of Paraguay and Uruguay. Despite being considerably bigger than the other two

buffer states, it is a rather weak country. Offensive realism would expect Bolivia to bandwagon with Brazil rather than confront it.

Conclusion on external balancing

The possibility of external balancing against an assertive and expansionist Brazil is very unlikely. When the variables of relative capabilities, relative distance, and offense-defense balance due to buffer zones are considered, it turns out that only Argentina would have both the capacity and the incentives to stand against the potential hegemon.

Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay, Guyana and Suriname, are all direct neighbors of Brazil and have reason to feel threatened. However, they are too small and weak. Therefore, they are more likely to bandwagon than to balance. Ecuador is also small and rather weak, but apart from that, the territories of Peru and Colombia provide Ecuador with a buffer zone. Therefore Ecuador is more likely to pass the buck to more powerful states who share a border with Brazil.

Chile is a strong country with a credible military force but it is not a direct neighbor of Brazil. In principle, it would be more inclined to pass the buck, like Ecuador. Moreover, it has more reasons to be concerned about Bolivia and Peru, direct neighbors with whom it has ongoing border disputes, than with Brazil, who is a distant threat.

Colombia and Venezuela are strong countries in the context of South America, in many respects only below Argentina and Brazil. Peru is not as strong as the other two but I would not characterize it as weak as Paraguay or Bolivia. The three countries have something in common, though: the Amazon Jungle provides them with a huge buffer zone. Furthermore, their population centers and resources are located behind the barrier of the Andes, which do not constitute the border with Brazil, but are located deep within their territories.

The development of trans-Amazonian logistics and transportation could change the game regarding this region, but for the moment, *ceteris paribus*, the combined effect of Amazonia and the Andes reduces the threat against a Brazilian advance.

There are two final comments I would like to make for this chapter.

Firstly, all that has been said hitherto is considered in the case of a worst case scenario in which Brazil show clear signs of an expansionist or aggressive campaign. Logically, if the threat was less tangible, the chances to form a balancing coalition would reduce even more.

Secondly, from the same geopolitical analysis of this chapter it can be concluded that, *ceteris paribus*, there is but one logical vector of expansion for Brazil, if it ever decided to launch an aggressive military campaign. That is in the south east of Brazil, from Santa Catalina and Rio Grande do Sul and towards the La Plata basin, where there are no major natural barriers in the form of mountain ranges or a vast area of thick rainforest.

Argentinean foreign policy decision-makers would be well advised to consider the possibility that if Brazil ever decides, for any reason, to launch an offensive campaign towards the eastern provinces of Mesopotamia, Argentina will probably have no choice but to face the threat by its own means, without aid from an extra-regional balancer such as the USA or from an external coalition of South American states.

Hence, the next chapter is about Argentinean internal balancing *vis-à-vis* Brazil.

6. Neoclassical realism and Argentinean internal balancing

6.1 Why neoclassical realism

Gideon Rose, who originated the term “neoclassical realism,” sees offensive realism, defensive realism and neoclassical realism as competing theories of foreign policy.¹⁷⁷ In this thesis, though, I will follow a conception of neorealism and neoclassical realism as complementary.

Neorealists acknowledge that they do not intend to explain everything that happens in world politics. Waltz warns against mistaking a theory of international politics for a theory of foreign policy.¹⁷⁸ Mearsheimer, on his part, comments that “offensive realism does not answer every question that arises in world politics, because there will be cases in which the theory is consistent with several possible outcomes. When this occurs, other theories have to be brought in to provide more precise explanations.”¹⁷⁹

Therefore, neorealism and neoclassical realism differ on the phenomena each seeks to explain, or the dependent variable. Whereas neorealism seeks to explain international outcomes, such as the likelihood of major war, the prospects for international cooperation, aggregate alliance patterns among states, arms races and crisis bargaining, neoclassical realism seeks to explain the foreign policy strategies of individual states, i.e. why different states or even the same state at different times pursues particular strategies in the international arena.¹⁸⁰

Waltz himself distinguishes between a theory of international politics and a theory of foreign policy. A theory of international politics, he says, “does not tell us why state X made a certain move last Tuesday. A theory at one level of generality cannot answer questions about matters at a different level of generality”.¹⁸¹

Neoclassical realist theories are theories of foreign policy, which can be applied to great powers but also to regional and small powers, developing countries, or divided, warring, or failed

¹⁷⁷ Gideon Rose, “Neoclassical Realism.”

¹⁷⁸ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory*, 121.

¹⁷⁹ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 11.

¹⁸⁰ Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, “Security Seeking under Anarchy” 132-133.

¹⁸¹ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory*, 121.

states.¹⁸² These theories explain when states cannot adapt properly to systemic constraints and what the consequences are. Explaining this requires a theory that integrates systemic-level and intervening unit-level variables.

The characterization of intervening variables differs according to the author. Rose speaks of “elite’s capacities”,¹⁸³ Taliaferro of “state power”,¹⁸⁴ and Christensen of “national political power”.¹⁸⁵ The three names refer to the idea that there is variance across states in the capacity of their decision makers to mobilize their resources for defense, even when confronted with the same threat.¹⁸⁶

Hence, neorealism and neoclassical realism should not be considered opponents. At most, they represent a division of labor.¹⁸⁷

6.2 The state and domestic actors

Neoclassical realism conceives states as basically a national security executive, comprised of the head of government and the ministers and officials charged with making foreign security policy. Many times the state has to bargain with domestic actors in order to extract resources and implement policies. These actors include the legislature, political parties, economic sectors, and the public opinion.¹⁸⁸

In this context, states assess and adapt to changes in their external environment partly as a result of their peculiar domestic structures and political situations. In other words, complex domestic political processes act as transmission belts that channel, mediate, and direct or redirect policy outputs in response to external forces, such as changes in relative power.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸² Steven E. Lobell, “Threat assessment, the state, and foreign policy: a neoclassical realist model,” *Neoclassical realism, the state, and foreign policy*, ed. Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2009) 43.

¹⁸³ Rose, “Neoclassical Realism.”

¹⁸⁴ Taliaferro, “State Building for Future Wars,” 466; 471-472.

¹⁸⁵ Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries. Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) 11-31.

¹⁸⁶ Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, 465.

¹⁸⁷ Brian Rathbun, “A Rose by Any other Name: Neoclassical Realism as the Logical and Necessary Extension of Structural Realism,” *Security Studies*, 17, 2008: 296-297.

¹⁸⁸ Taliaferro, Lobell, and Ripsman, *Neoclassical realism*, 25.

¹⁸⁹ Schweller, “Unanswered Threats,” 164.

In order to understand the implications of a neoclassical realist approach to the enterprise of internal balancing in Argentina, the first step is thus to identify the actors involved.

Argentina is a federal republic with a presidential system of government, like the United States and the majority of South American states.¹⁹⁰ The Executive power is exercised by the president, who is both head of government and head of state. Legislative power is vested in both the Executive and the National Congress. There is also an independent Judiciary.¹⁹¹

The President as head of government, thus, is the head of the national security executive. The President appoints and removes ambassadors, is commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces, provides for the military posts and is in charge of the organization and distribution of the Armed Forces, etc. As regards the national foreign and security policies, the President is assisted by the Minister of Foreign Relations.¹⁹²

Then there are the domestic actors. In the first place there is the National Congress, composed of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. The Congress is in charge of setting taxes and customs, and is entitled to approve or reject every international treaty that Argentina signs with other states or international organizations. Declarations of war and the signing of peace, as well as the mobilization of the national troops, within or without the Argentine territory, must be allowed by the Congress.¹⁹³

In practice though, Argentina is a hyper-presidential system, and the constitutional amendment of 1994, designed to limit the powers of the president, has not been successful at that. The President has authority to issue decrees with legal force in a wider range of situations than in the United States, for example. The issuance of so-called “necessity and urgency decrees” often occurs simultaneously with the invocation of formal emergency powers. Argentine Presidents have many times relied on these decrees to advance their agendas, including budgetary increases.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ The only exception is Suriname, a parliamentary republic where the president is head of state and head of government but depends on the parliament.

¹⁹¹ *Constitución de la Nación Argentina*, Sections 1, 44, 87, 99 (3), 108, 1 May 2016, <<http://www.senado.gov.ar/deInteresEnglish>>

¹⁹² *Constitución*, Section 99.

¹⁹³ *Constitución*, Section 75.

¹⁹⁴ Susan Rose-Ackerman, “Hyper-Presidentialism: Separation of Powers without Check and Balances in Argentina and the Philippines,” *Berkeley Journal of International Law* 29, no. 1, 2011: 246-333.

From 1930 to 1982, the Argentinean military has conducted six coups d'état (1930, 1943, 1956, 1962, 1966, 1976), constituting itself as a very important veto player in national politics. However, the exit of the military junta in 1983 after Malvinas War meant the end of a period of military *de facto* regimes. Unlike in Chile and Brazil, where military regimes could negotiate their exit and maintain positions of power in the structure of the state, in Argentina the military internal power collapsed completely and so the military corporation found itself unable to lobby for resources.¹⁹⁵

Compulsory military service was dismantled, along with the arms industry and an intermediate range ballistic missile project. Argentina adhered to Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean. The military budget was reduced to the minimum necessary to cover daily expenditures, and the arms imports decreased almost to zero.¹⁹⁶

A more important veto player is the Peronist movement which usually has a decisive presence in the legislature and most of province governors. Peronism has ruled Argentina for most of the time since 1983. Most of trade union leaders are also affiliated to the movement. The acquiescence of Peronism is a key element to the stability of the government. In fact, since 1983, only Peronists presidencies completed its mandate. The two non-Peronist presidents (Alfonsín 1983-1989, De La Rúa, 1999-2001) had to resign before due time.

Peronism is better characterized as a movement rather than a party. Even though it has left and right wings within itself, its ideology is originally a blend of nationalism and laborism. Peronist presidents, however, have enacted radically opposed policies and the partisans have accommodated according to the occasion.¹⁹⁷ Examples abound. For instance, Peronist legislators voted for privatizing Argentinean oil company YPF. Ten years later they enthusiastically voted for the state to rebuy it and run it again, seemingly disregarding all the records and archives. In any case, whoever is in charge of the national security executive will need to deal with Peronism.

¹⁹⁵ Escudé, “¿Somos un Protectorado de Chile y Brasil?”

¹⁹⁶ Escudé, “Un Experimento Pacifista.”

¹⁹⁷ “The persistence of Peronism,” *The Economist*, 17 Oct. 2015. See also Verónica Herrera, “The Persistence of Peronism,” *Berkeley Review of Latin American Studies*, spring 2007.

When it comes to societal or economic elites, it is noteworthy that the major economic partner of Argentina is Brazil, representing 20% of exports and 22% of imports. Argentina's top exports are soybean meal, delivery trucks, soybeans, con, and soybean oil. Its top imports are petroleum gas, refined petroleum, cars, vehicle parts and telephones.¹⁹⁸

Liberal theories (complex interdependence and neoliberal institutionalism) establish a causal connection between economic interdependence and a greater likelihood of peace. Therefore they cannot explain how states can simultaneously view and treat one another both as valued trading partners and security threats.

Jennifer Sterling-Folker presents a neoclassical realist answer: states compete with one another over the allocation of scarce resources at the international level, but at the same time within each state different groups compete with one another over the allocation of resources. International competition and intra-national competition affect each other and cannot be isolated. That is why China and United States see themselves as both partners and competitors, and why security tensions between China and Taiwan remain high despite increasing economic ties and clear power asymmetries.¹⁹⁹

The same case can be made about Argentina's relations with Brazil. Brazil is Argentina's major economic partner and at the same time, under certain circumstances, can represent a security threat. Therefore it is important to understand threat assessment. A timely and efficient balancing will be conditional on a consensus on threat assessment by state and the societal elites.²⁰⁰ This is directly related to the next section.

6.3 Internal balancing

“Under-balancing”

One of the research questions of neoclassical realism is why some states fail to balance. According to Schweller, “under-balancing” occurs “when the state does not balance or does so

¹⁹⁸ *The World Factbook 2013-14*; See also Observatory of Economic Complexity, *Argentina*, 30th April 2016 <http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/arg/>.

¹⁹⁹ Jennifer Sterling-Folker, “Neoclassical realism and identity: peril despite profit across the Taiwan Strait,” *Neoclassical realism, the state, and foreign policy*, ed. Steven E. Lobell, Norrin M. Ripsman, and Jeffrey W. Taliaferro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2009) 99-138.

²⁰⁰ Lobell, “Threat assessment, the state, and foreign policy,” 42-74.

inefficiently in response to a dangerous and unappeasable aggressor. When the state under-balances, it either misperceives the intentions of the rising power as more benign than they in fact are or, if it correctly perceives the threat, does not adopt prudent policies to protect itself for reasons of domestic politics.”²⁰¹

Schweller proposes two domestic-level reasons for under-reaction to structural incentives: 1) actors’ preferences, which may be more influenced by domestic than international concerns, do not create incentives to adopt a balancing policy; 2) potential domestic political risks and costs of balancing are too high. Schweller concludes by suggesting four unit-level variables to explain variation across space and time in state responses to threats: 1) elite consensus; 2) government or regime vulnerability; 3) social cohesion; 4) elite cohesion.²⁰²

The closer the policymaking process and actual state-society relations approximate a unitary actor, the more accurate realism’s predictions. Conversely, when states are divided at the elite and societal levels, they are less likely to behave in accordance with balance of power predictions. Leaders of incoherent states are less willing and able to undertake high political and policy risks to balance than are leaders of coherent states.²⁰³

Therefore, Argentina will be able to enact an internal balancing policy as long as its national security executive can maintain a coalition with political and economic or societal elites. The cooperation of the Peronist movement is important to guarantee regime stability.

Steven E. Lobell argues that states do not only respond to aggregate shifts in the international distribution of power, but also to shifts in specific components of other states’ material capabilities.²⁰⁴ The export-oriented sector will most likely have a material interest in different types of economic foreign policies and will focus on certain components of Brazilian material capabilities. The security sector will have its own particular focus on them. The inputs of these sectors will have an impact on threat assessment.

Assuming that Argentina presents a coherent shape, what strategies will implement to balance internally?

²⁰¹ Schweller, “Unanswered Threats,” 159, 167-168.

²⁰² Schweller, “Unanswered Threats,” 169.

²⁰³ Schweller, “Unanswered Threats,” 161.

²⁰⁴ Lobell, “Threat assessment, the state, and foreign policy...,” 42-74.

Balancing strategies

Another research question of neoclassical realism is why and how states choose among different types of balancing strategies: emulation, innovation, or the continuation of existing strategies. Emulation is the conscious, purposeful imitation, in full or in part, by one state of any institution, technology, or governing practice of another state. Innovation is the conscious, purposeful effort to offset the perceived relative power advantage of another state by the creation of entirely new institutions, technologies, or governing practices.²⁰⁵

Taliaferro proposes two variables when it comes to choosing between emulation and innovation: high or low level of external threat, and high or low extraction and mobilization capacity (see Table 2). Extraction and mobilization capacity are the key intervening variables of neoclassical realism. According to Taliaferro, states can try to increase them, and consequently their ability to pursue emulation or innovation, by purveying nationalist or statist ideologies. A lack of nationalist sentiment or an anti-statist ideology can limit the state's ability to emulate or innovate.²⁰⁶

In Argentina, nationalism has been always present and takes different forms. Historian Michael Goebel distinguishes a territorial "Malvinist" nationalism, and a partisan, revisionist nationalism, which is sort of an internal historiographic tendency that opposes a liberal historic narrative.²⁰⁷ The territorial nationalism has been entrenched by decades of public education.²⁰⁸ Others believe that despite widespread profusion of patriotic symbols (in particular during football World Cups and other major sports events), Argentineans are not as united as it seems.²⁰⁹

Whereas the exact degree of nationalism in Argentina may be arguable, there can be little doubt about the hegemony of statist ideology. According to a national survey by Ibarómetro, 8 out

²⁰⁵ Taliaferro, "State Building for Future Wars," 466, 471-472.

²⁰⁶ Taliaferro, "State Building for Future Wars," 467.

²⁰⁷ Michael Goebel, interviewed by Walter Curia, "El ciclo K muestra que el nacionalismo puede hibernar y reaparecer," *La Nación* (Argentina), 29 Mar. 2015.

²⁰⁸ See Carlos Escudé, "Argentine Territorial Nationalism," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 20, 1988: 139-165; Carlos Escudé, "Education, political culture and foreign policy. The case of Argentina," *Working Paper Series of Duke-UNC Program of Latin American Studies*, 1992; Matthew C. Benwell and Klaus Dodds, "Argentine territorial nationalism revisited: The Malvinas / Falklands dispute and geographies of everyday nationalism," *Political Geography* 30, 2011: 441-449.

²⁰⁹ "Para los argentinos, la Patria es un sentimiento de amor y espanto," *Clarín* (Argentina), 10 Jul. 2005.

of 10 Argentines believe the state should be the main responsible for people’s welfare.²¹⁰ As of 2014, 13 million Argentines had state incomes and half the adult population depended on national budget. Between 2000 and 2012, the state grew 60% and represented 42.5% of the economy. Currently, Argentina has the biggest tax pressure in its history and leads the ranking of countries with the highest tax rates in the world.²¹¹

External threats	Extraction and mobilization capacity	
	High	Low
High	Emulation of military, governing and technological practices of the system’s most successful states, at least in the short run	Greater difficulty in pursuing emulation, at least in the short run
Low	Innovation to enhance long-term security and power	Less likely to pursue emulation or innovation

Table 5. Emulation or innovation²¹²

Consequently, there are reasons to locate Argentina on the “High extraction and mobilization capacity” column of Table 2. When it comes to innovation or emulation, the former is more costly and time consuming than emulation. The question is basically how soon Argentina will begin to rebuild its armed forces. At the moment, the situation is dramatic. There is the opinion that Argentina would not be able to withhold an attack from Paraguay for more than 24 hours.²¹³ Argentina should then start a process of innovation now, before external threats become high. For example, in the event that Brazil decides to be more assertive in its role of regional hegemon.

If Argentina does decide to innovate, there is another reason to begin as soon as possible. Military organizations seek to reduce uncertainty, and the best way to do so is to repeat standard operating procedures. Innovation in military doctrine increases operational uncertainty. If a war comes during the transition and the organization finds itself between doctrines, the ability of

²¹⁰ “Ocho de cada diez argentinos quieren un estado activo,” *Política Nacional*, 23 Jul. 2015.

²¹¹ “De 1950 a 2014, estatismo sin escalas,” *La Nación* (Argentina), 1 Feb. 2014; Martín Kanenguiser, “La Argentina tiene hoy la mayor presión tributaria de su historia,” *La Nación* (Argentina), 24 Mar. 2015; Mike Bird, “These are the 19 countries with the highest tax rates in the world,” *Business Insider*, 8 Oct. 2015.

²¹² Adapted from Taliaferro, “State Building for Future Wars,” 467.

²¹³ Carlos Escudé, “¿Somos un protectorado de Chile y Brasil?”

commanders to lead combat operations will decline. Military organizations are more inclined to innovate when they have failed –suffered a defeat- or when civilians intervene from without.²¹⁴

It was already mentioned that in the case of Argentina after the defeat in 1982, the Armed Forces did not innovate, but were rather progressively dismantled. The argument of Talmadge presented in chapter 4 about how regimes facing significant coup threats are unlikely to adopt military organization practices that maximize military capability comes at play here. When it comes to military doctrine innovation, the case of “Plan Ejército Argentino 2025” is a good example. In 2007, the Argentinean Army proposed the Ministry of Defense a new military doctrine based on the concept of “war for the natural resources”. Whatever the merits of that new idea, the President Nestor Kirchner rejected it outright, sending the message that initiatives such as these by the Army were not welcomed.²¹⁵ Under such circumstances, the civilian intervention into doctrinal matters is both necessary and essential.

Offensive realism expects Brazil to make a run for regional hegemony. In chapters 5 and 6 I argued why offshore balancing and regional balancing are not likely to happen. At this point, two future scenarios are possible. If Argentina succeeds at internal balancing, then Brazilian hegemony can be prevented, and perhaps there is even a possibility to restore something close to bipolarity in the region. Success will depend on the ability of the national security executive to form a coalition with political, societal and economical elites to assess a threat and define a balancing strategy. If innovation is the strategy of choice, then the sooner it starts the better. However, under-balancing may occur too. In that case, Brazil will be within reach of regional hegemony.

Finally, Argentina should be careful in implementing its internal balancing strategy. There is the risk of self-fulfilled prophecy. This could happen if imprudent aggressive rhetoric or an overtly offensive doctrine comes into light, causing Brazil to launch a preventive war.

²¹⁴ Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain and Germany between the World Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014).

²¹⁵ Daniel Gallo, “Preparan al Ejército para defender recursos naturales,” *La Nación* (Argentina), 25 Feb. 2007; “Dan precisiones sobre el Plan Ejército Argentino 2025,” *Infobae* (Argentina), 27 Feb. 2007.

7. Wild card: nuclear weapons

Some states in the international system have attained and maintained nuclear weapons: the five permanent members of United Nations Security Council, India, Pakistan, and presumably Israel. Some others have attained nuclear weapons but gave them up (Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and South Africa). Others are still trying to attain them, others never tried (nuclear abstinence) and some states tried but gave up. This last category is labelled “nuclear reversal” and includes Argentina and Brazil.²¹⁶

The 1967 Treaty of Tlatelolco banned nuclear weapons in Latin America. Argentina, despite signing the treaty, did not pursue ratification domestically until 1994. The military coup in Brazil in 1964 brought to power a nationalist military regime that was unenthusiastic for the nuclear weapons free zone project. Both Argentina and Brazil were opposed to any infringements on their sovereignty. Their opposition to the global non-proliferation regime was explicit. With the return to democracy in both countries, the nuclear programs suffered from their association with the discredited military regimes, their high cost and the international condemnation.²¹⁷ Argentina and Brazil joined the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1995 and 1998.

However, Argentina and Brazil still possess civilian nuclear technology. Argentina exports nuclear reactors. Brazil is developing a nuclear submarine. In 2008, both countries signed an agreement for the establishment of a binational plant to enrich uranium with commercial purpose.²¹⁸

Offensive realism expects great powers to seek nuclear superiority over its rivals. The balance of land power would be of minor importance in a world dominated by a nuclear hegemon,

²¹⁶ Ariel E. Levite, “Never Say Never Again. Nuclear Reversal Revisited,” *Going Nuclear. Nuclear Proliferation and International Security in the 21st Century*, ed. Michael E. Brown, Owen R. Coté Jr., Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010) 297-326. For a theory of Nuclear Proliferation, see Nuno P. Monteiro and Alexandre Debs, “The Strategic Logic of Nuclear Proliferation,” *Draft for presentation at the Princeton International Relations Faculty Colloquium on October 7, 2013*, 29 Sep. 2013.

²¹⁷ Paul D. Beamont and Thomas Rubinsky, “Latin America and Nuclear Weapons,” *ILPI Publications, Background Papers*, no. 2, Dec. 2012.

²¹⁸ Escudé, “Un Experimento Pacifista...”, 10-11

and probably the same is true in a region. It is difficult to achieve and maintain, though, because rival states will try to develop their own nuclear retaliatory force.²¹⁹

Some authors believe that Brazil, which will possess an indigenously developed nuclear submarine operational by 2017, is already close to building the bomb. After all, Brazil sees itself as a natural candidate for permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council. All current permanent members have nuclear weapons.²²⁰

On the other hand, Brazil's constitution bans the development of nuclear weapons. There is also the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials, created in 1991, a binational safeguards agency to verify the peaceful use of nuclear materials. In 2015, its inspectors conducted 328 inspections in nuclear facilities of both countries.²²¹

The abandonment of Treaty of Tlatelolco and Non-Proliferation Treaty by Brazil or Argentina is a wild card or black swan event, i.e. an event of high impact, but a low probability, meaning that it is unlikely, but not impossible. The impact of such an incident can change whole systems and trends, and therefore contains a strong element of strategic surprise. Wild cards stimulate strategic thinking and contribute to flexibility and agility in the case such surprise eventually occur.²²² Therefore, they should not be disregarded.

²¹⁹ Mearsheimer, *Tragedy*, 145-157.

²²⁰ Hans Rühle, "Nuclear Proliferation in Latin America: Is Brazil Developing the Bomb?" *Spiegel Online International*, 7 May 2010; Debalina Ghoshal, "South America Goes Nuclear: Now Brazil," *Gatestone Institute*, 20 Aug. 2013.

²²¹ ABACC, 3 May 2016 http://www.abacc.org.br/?page_id=7&lang=es.

²²² Gaub and Laban, "Arab Futures," 45.

Conclusion

For the last thirty years, Argentinean Armed Forces have followed a path of decay and abandonment. The defeat of the military regime in the 1982 war discredited them so they were no longer able to lobby for resources. As a consequence, military budget is the lowest in the region. Some authors argue it is time to dismantle them completely once and for all, and explain that due to democratization there is no more space for conflict hypothesis or “balance of power thinking” in the region.²²³ Offensive realism and scenario methodology provide an opposite argument.

Brazil has grown into a potential regional hegemon in South America. According to offensive realism, there is no such a thing as an innocent rise in capabilities. The more capabilities one state acquires, the more power it will like to exert. This rise in capabilities might stop out of reasons unrelated to offensive realism, in which case **Brazilian rise stops (Scenario 1)**. However, the megatrends that sustain it are most likely to continue in the future.

In terms of scenario methodology, it could be said that there are **1) driving forces:** distribution of power and material capabilities sustained by megatrends in population and wealth; **2) critical uncertainties:** the role of United States as an offshore balancer; **3) contextual conditions:** geographical variables such as relative distance or position, and buffer zones; **4) wild cards:** Brazil and/or Argentina resume nuclear projects successfully.

Scenario methodology allows us then to build three more possible future scenarios for South America, according to the premises of offensive realism. In the **second scenario, Brazilian hegemony is prevented** by either **offshore balancing** by the United States, or **external balancing** by a coalition of South American states. In the **third scenario**, it is Argentina that, by means of **internal balancing**, is able to slow down the continental tendency to unipolarity and prevent Brazilian hegemony.

In a **fourth scenario**, balancing fails altogether and **Brazil obtains regional hegemony**. This means uncontested dictate of behavior rules, supported by a credible military capability. In the worst case, it means an aggressive campaign of expansion and conquest.

²²³ See ft. 3, 4, 5.

The research question of this thesis was: *From the point of view of Argentinean decision-makers, what are the options in order to check an eventual Brazilian attempt at regional hegemony?* In other words, the question is about the likeliness of the three scenarios presented above. Therefore, it can be subdivided as follows: Firstly, *should Argentina rely on extra regional balancing conducted by the United States?* If the answer is in the negative, *what are the chances of external balancing in South America, i.e. a coalition of South American states?* Finally, if both extra regional and external balancing fail, and Argentina must recur to internal balancing, *what will be the challenges and choices of Argentinean decision makers?*

In chapter 4, I have argued against reliance on offshore balancing by the United States. Brazil can take advantage of a window of opportunity, whereby the United States is not able to react properly to a Brazilian aggression in South America. Furthermore, the consequences of an extra regional intervention are hard to predict and could be unpleasant for the third states involved, which would do better to try balancing themselves.

In chapter 5, I have found, based on distribution of power, relative position or distance, and the significance of Amazonia as a buffer zone, that external balancing is very unlikely. Argentina is the only country with the potential will and capabilities to balance against Brazil. The other states are either more likely to bandwagon (those too small and weak) or pass the buck (those feeling less threatened).

In chapter 6, I have recurred to neoclassical realism in order to understand the main challenges and choices when it comes to internal balancing. A consensus between the national security executive and domestic actors will be of the essence for a proper threat assessment. Leaders of an incoherent state will also be less willing and able to undertake high political and policy risks to balance. The choices of strategy are dependent on level of external threat and state power, defined as the ability to extract and mobilize resources. At the same time, state power is dependent on nationalism and statist ideology. In the case of Argentina, the result is the possibility to choose innovation as long as the threat level remains low. Innovation should start as soon as possible, though, lest the military organization gets caught while changing doctrines.

Lastly, in chapter 7, it was mentioned that the obtainment of nuclear weapons, however unlikely, is a possibility that renders the balance of land power irrelevant. Hence, it should not be overlooked.

The future does not need to be as ominous as it looks in this thesis. After all, Mearsheimer's offensive realism is not an uncontested theory. In this sense, one last stage of scenario methodology would be to reevaluate offensive realism in light of the generated scenarios. Additionally, in the final section of chapter 4, I have mentioned some limitations to Brazil's rise. The neoclassical realist analysis I have made in chapter 7 is valid for Brazil as well: Brazil also needs to stand as a coherent state in order to act as neorealism would expect it.

Notwithstanding all the aforementioned, it is a bold statement to conclude that Argentina can spare defense forces and a security policy. If the majority of Argentineans prefer to think that they live in a security-abundant environment, with no conflict at all in the horizon, it might do no harm, as long as those in charge of national security and foreign policy play its role properly. Their role sometimes involves going beyond politically correct thinking. In an international system where realism is the paradigm, a state must provide its own security, lest it becomes some other state's protectorate.

Abstract

Does Argentina still need to maintain its armed forces and a security policy? After the defeat in the 1982 War and the return to democracy from a military de facto regime, Argentinean Armed Forces lost prestige and their budget is now the lowest in the region. Many authors are of the view that they should be dismantled once and for all, for the era of conflict hypothesis and balance of power in South America is gone. The purpose of this thesis is to provide a counterargument. Scenario methodology allows taking Mearsheimer's offensive realism as a premise for thinking possible futures in South America. Brazil has grown into a candidate for regional hegemony, defined as the capacity to impose the rule of behavior to the other states, sustained by a credible use of force. In this context, what are the options Argentinean decision-makers have in order to check an eventual Brazilian hegemony? Can they rely that the United States will intervene as an offshore balancer? What are the chances of external balancing, i.e. a coalition of South American states against Brazil? What are their main challenges and options in terms of internal balancing? Whether a hegemonic scenario is more likely or not will depend on the answer to those questions. The thesis also recurs to geopolitical thinking and neoclassical realism to complement offensive realism when necessary. The findings will have implications for both offensive realism and Argentinean defense policy.

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